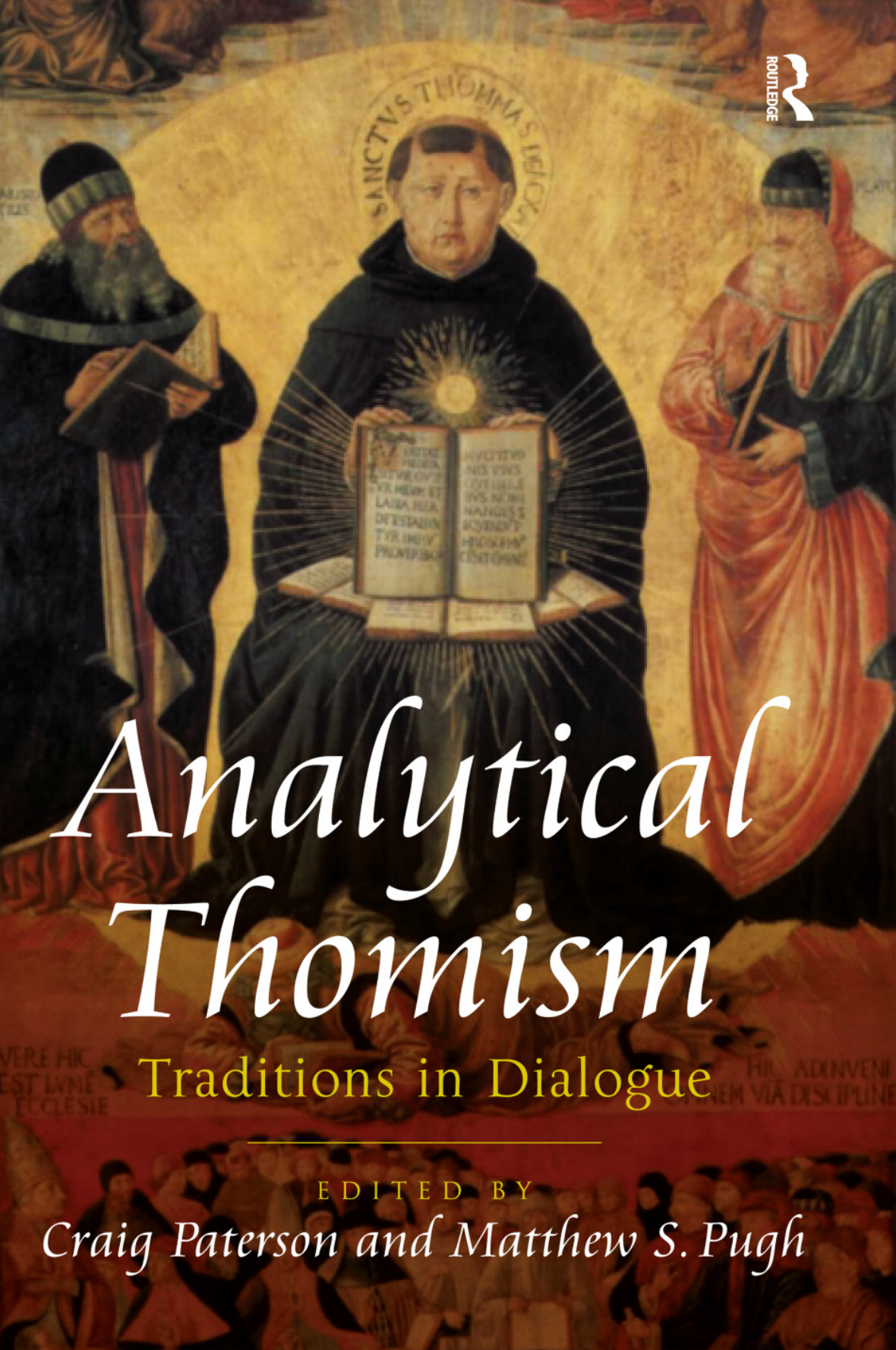




Analytical Thomism

Traditions in Dialogue

EDITED BY

Craig Paterson and Matthew S. Pugh

ANALYTICAL THOMISM

Dedication

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Analytical Thomism

Traditions in Dialogue

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Aquinas's Work
<i>De aetern.</i>	De aeternitate mundi
<i>De anim.</i>	Sententia super De anima
<i>De ente</i>	De ente et essentia
<i>De hebdom.</i>	Expositio in librum Boethii De hebdomadibus
<i>De Trin.</i>	Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate
<i>In De caelo</i>	In libros De caelo et mundo expositio
<i>In Eth.</i>	Sententia libri Ethicorum
<i>In Meta.</i>	In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum expositio
<i>In Peri.</i>	In libros Peri Hermeneias expositio
<i>In Phys.</i>	Sententia super Physicam
<i>In Phys. expo.</i>	In octo libros Physicorum expositio
<i>In Post.</i>	In libros posteriorum Analyticorum expositio
<i>In Sent.</i>	Scriptum super libros Sententiarum
<i>QDA</i>	Quaestiones disputatae de anima
<i>QDM</i>	Quaestiones disputatae de malo
<i>QDP</i>	Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei
<i>QDV</i>	Quaestiones disputatae de veritate
<i>Quodl.</i>	Quaestiones de quodlibet, I–XII
<i>SCG</i>	Summa contra Gentiles
<i>ST</i>	Summa theologiae

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Preface and Acknowledgments

The idea to create such a volume gradually emerged over the course of several congenial, if at times spirited, discussions between the editors over lunch and dinner. Both of the editors were then new tenure track appointees in the Philosophy Department of Providence College. One of the editors' background was in the Anglo-American analytic tradition and the other was primarily in neo-Thomism, especially the philosophy of Jacques Maritain.

Via our discussions, both of the editors gradually realized that what we were really engaged in was a process of analytic-Thomistic dialogue, resulting in the fruitful exchange of ideas, to our mutual benefit. Time and again we found that we would end up reading passages from the *Summa Theologiae* and then heartily discuss them at some length. Aquinas became a key focus of our scholarly exchanges, whereby sometimes we found that analytic insights could cast new light on problems in Thomistic philosophy and that Aquinas's thought could also be a splendid resource for casting new light on some of the vexed metaphysical challenges currently facing, for example, contemporary philosophy of mind.

Our positive experiences in dialogue were also spurred on by our joint discussions of a series of articles written by John Haldane, Professor of Philosophy at St Andrews University in Scotland. In his series of articles, Haldane has called for a renewal of Thomism via positive engagement with analytic philosophy. Due to our own positive experiences with the nature of this dialogue, we decided to try and further respond to Haldane's call by seeking to add our own voices to the wider discourse.

Originally we had thought to write a joint article or two highlighting some of the positive exchanges we had encountered via our dialogue. The more deeply that we dug into the question of different avenues for scholarly discussion, however, our direction changed towards organizing a conference on the topic of Analytical Thomism. Logistic and funding difficulties, alas, conspired against us. Instead, taking advantage of the remarkable powers of e-mail and attachments, we decided to concentrate on gathering together scholars in Europe and the United States as contributors to an edited collection. We were hopeful that these contributions would further build on the positive contributions already made to the topic in a special issue of *The Monist* (vol. 80, no. 4 1997), prepared under the editorial direction of John Haldane and a special issue of *New Blackfriars* (vol. 80, April 1999), prepared under the editorial direction of Fergus Kerr.

Having got firm commitments of intent from a number of distinguished and newer scholars interested in engaging in dialogue (reflected in the sub-title of this volume), we then decided to approach possible publishers for the project. Fortunately we did not encounter a long or fruitless journey to find one. We wrote

to Ashgate and we were very pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated by Sarah Lloyd, Publisher, to take the project on board and realize it in print. Ashgate's patience and understanding with our somewhat "amateur" approach to logistics greatly contributed to the project ever seeing the light of day.

Inevitably in the coordination of many contributions from different parts of the globe, the best laid plans for production schedules often go askew. Deadlines had to be revised. Nevertheless things finally came together as the contributions were submitted. We were very impressed with the standard of the submissions and felt that the content of the project more than amply justified our goal of further promoting the exchange of dialogue between Thomism and analytic philosophy.

Here we would like to extend our grateful thanks to our contributors, without whose considerable intellectual labors and understanding, this project would not have been possible. In addition to our directly commissioned contributions, we would also like to thank the editorial staff of *The Monist* and the *The Thomist* for permission to reprint three contributions in this collection, contributions whose presence we felt would enhance both the content and utility of this volume for the reader.

We would also like to extend our thanks to John Haldane, who notwithstanding a hectic publishing and lecturing schedule, kindly agreed to write an afterword.

Finally, we would like to thank our family and friends (they know who they are), in providing much needed emotional and financial support to the editors during the whole process of publishing this volume. Without their considerable help, offered always in the spirit of love and friendship, this project would most certainly have floundered.

Craig Paterson and Matthew Pugh, April 2005

Introduction to Analytical Thomism

The first question that might occur to someone picking up the present volume for the first time is, what is Analytical Thomism? This is a very good question but one that is not easy to answer. The second part of the phrase is perhaps somewhat easier to respond to than the first, for “Thomism” can more readily be identified as referring to a particular corpus of thought, namely, the thought of Thomas Aquinas and the subsequent interpretation of his ideas. Analytic philosophers, on the other hand, are still relatively unclear about what “analytical” as in “analytic philosophy” is or what its possible connections to Thomism might be. Does analytic philosophy, for example, embrace a particular set of doctrines or beliefs? Most analytic philosophers would answer no. They would insist that whatever analytic philosophy is, and whatever its historical origins, analytic philosophy is today used by philosophers to argue for positions running the length of the philosophical spectrum – from various kinds of realism and idealism in metaphysics, to empiricism and rationalism in epistemology, and to non-cognitivism and utilitarianism in ethics. Is analytic philosophy, then, primarily a philosophical method, a particular way of doing philosophy? Again, most analytic philosophers would say that there is no particular method of doing analytic philosophy apart from giving high priority to rigorous argumentation and clarity of expression. But many philosophers (indeed, one would hope most philosophers) who would not normally be called analytic philosophers have given priority to sound argumentation and clarity of expression.

What, then, could analytical philosophy’s appeal be to Thomists, who certainly, in Aquinas, have a first rate example of a rigorous and disciplined philosophical and theological thinker? Do Analytical Thomists turn to analytic philosophy simply in order to “pick up” helpful techniques for assisting them in the interpretative clarification of specific aspects of Aquinas’s thought or are they more deeply drawn to the wellsprings of analytical philosophy because they hold that an analytical approach to philosophy, can, more effectively than traditional neo-Thomism, illuminate our critical understanding of the deepest conceptual foundations of his thought?

The nature of the relationship between analytic philosophy and Thomism raises, in the minds of many, the following line of questioning: must Analytical Thomists be committed to any of the traditionally framed doctrines of Thomistic thought? Must Analytical Thomists, for example, hold a philosophic commitment to some way(s) of rationally demonstrating (*or at least* defending the possibility of) the existence of God, specifically the God of Christianity? Or, must an Analytic Thomist, at least, be committed to supporting some form of hylomorphism?

These are all legitimate questions that anyone calling himself or herself an Analytical Thomist must, in due course, address, for he or she will, most assuredly, be pressed into addressing such questions *viz.* debate in the various channels of scholarly communication. *Analytical Thomism: Traditions in Dialogue*, was conceived of by us as just such a channel by which to invite well established, as well as newer and emerging scholars, in both Europe and the United States, to reflect on this crisscross of influence between analytic philosophy and Thomism, whether positively or negatively. As the reader will soon find out, the contents of this volume run the gambit of those who view the dialogue as a rapprochement between analytical philosophy and Thomism to those who are lukewarm or decidedly skeptical about the very possibility of a genuinely fruitful exchange of ideas.

Conscious as we are of the need for an introduction, especially in an edited collection, to provide the reader with something of an overview of its terrain, we think that this goal can best be achieved by outlining, albeit very briefly, something of the historical growth of Thomism, turning then to a brief account of how analytic philosophy in the twentieth century can be viewed in relation to that history, before finally turning to a further consideration of what the phrase “Analytical Thomism,” can be taken to mean in light of this brief historical account.

The history of Thomism can usefully be divided into a number of phases. Almost immediately after the death of Aquinas in 1274, parts of Aquinas’s philosophy met with condemnation, first by Bishop Tempier of Paris in 1277, then by the Dominican Robert Kilwardby and later by William de la Mare. Some of Aquinas’s fellow Dominicans came to his defense, however, such as William of Macclesfield and John of Paris and this resulted, fifty years later, in Aquinas’s canonization in 1323. By the time of John Capreolus in the fifteenth century, Aquinas was the favored philosopher of the Dominicans and they began to produce commentaries on the *Summa Theologiae*. These commentaries were written not only to spread Aquinas’s teachings, but also to combat the “rival” philosophies of Scotus and Ockham. Thus began the first phase of Thomism.

One of the consequences of the Council of Trent (1545–63) was the creation of new religious orders like the Jesuits, who, under the influence of Ignatius of Loyola, championed the philosophy of Aquinas. This in turn gave rise, along with the work of the Post-Tridentine Dominicans, to a new phase of Thomist thought, dominated by the commentaries of Cajetan, John of St Thomas, and the Jesuit works of Domingo de Soto, Luis de Molina and Francesco Suarez. By the time Aquinas had been named a Doctor of the Church in the sixteenth century, the two main schools of Thomistic thought were the Dominican in Italy and the Jesuit in Spain. This promising second phase of Thomism would end, unfortunately, in a heated dispute between these two schools over the vexed issue of grace and free will.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Thomism can be said to have fallen on “hard times” and nothing of any real enduring value was really produced by the Thomists of these centuries. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, something of a renewal and revitalization of Thomism began

with the work of such thinkers as Tommaso Zigliara and Joseph Kleutgen, culminating in 1879 in Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. As John Haldane has noted in "Thomism and the Future of Catholic Philosophy," the rebirth of Thomistic philosophy which *Aeterni Patris* occasioned, looked in two directions: (i) the "problematic" which sought to use the philosophy of Aquinas to respond to the philosophical challenges of the day, such as the idealism stemming from Descartes and Kant or the empiricism of Hume, and (ii) the "historical" which sought to use the latest techniques of textual analysis and historical research to uncover the "true" Aquinas by stripping away the accretions of later interpreters such as Cajetan and John of St Thomas.¹

Neither approach, of course, was without difficulties, but the most daunting task fell to those who wished to use Aquinas's insights to meet the philosophical challenges of the day. For one thing, these Thomists could not help but be influenced by the very philosophies they wished to engage. Though they were convinced of the essential correctness of many of Aquinas's basic philosophical theses, they could also appreciate the many insights of the philosophers and philosophies that they ultimately came to reject. They could see, in other words, that some of these ideas could actually be used to support, clarify and further advance some of Aquinas's basic philosophical and theological positions. Thus in Poland, for instance, the phenomenology of Husserl and his interpreters like Roman Ingarden, along with the work of Max Scheler, were incorporated in various ways into the philosophy of Aquinas, often with fruitful results. The most famous and successful example of this particular marriage was, of course, Karol Wojtyła's *The Acting Person*.²

Trying to effect a rapprochement or even synthesis between different philosophies is something of a "tricky business" and always runs the risk (charge) of distorting the philosophies being synthesized, as happened, in the eyes of many, with the development in the twentieth century, of "Transcendental Thomism." Kant had had a major impact on the thinking of many Thomists, and though most were inclined to reject Kantian idealism, some, such as Pierre Rousselot and Joseph Marechal, embraced the Kantian turn toward the subject. Marechal, in particular, found the starting point for metaphysics in the subject. He claimed, however, that Kant had failed to see that only an Infinite Being can ground or guarantee the phenomenal object. Kant had failed, in other words, to see that the inner dynamism of the operative intellect in the very synthesizing formation of the object of consciousness, required an absolute terminus. In effect, Marechal believed that Aquinas's metaphysical critique of the object could be successfully transplanted into Kant's transcendental critique of the object. Although Marechal's transcendental version of Thomism certainly had some very notable followers, for example, Bernard Lonergan, most Thomists (and Kantians) rejected this amalgamation of Aquinas and Kant as being an unworkable distortion of both philosophies.³

Other Thomists, influenced by continental philosophy, were, perhaps, able to effect more successful engagements between Thomism and other traditions of thought. Names that immediately come to mind here are Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson. These two thinkers generated a school of Thomism indebted to late

nineteenth and early twentieth century secular French philosophy (particularly French existentialism) and it became known as “Existential Thomism.”

Working initially under the influence of Henri Bergson and Maurice Blondel, Maritain’s conversion to Catholicism, and his subsequent study of the texts of Aquinas under the guidance of his French Dominican mentor Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, led him to embrace a version of Thomism based to a large extent on the commentaries of Cajetan and John of St Thomas. Maritain’s many books reflected what he took to be the perennial themes of Aquinas’s philosophy, such as the primacy of a metaphysics of *esse* understood as the act of being (*actus essendi*); the necessity for an intuition of metaphysical being as the proper starting point for Thomistic metaphysics; and in epistemology, the importance of the notion of truth as adequation. Though Maritain, in his philosophy, was certainly committed to many of Aquinas’s basic philosophical and theological propositions, he did not hesitate to draw on and adapt the secular philosophies of the day if he felt that they could support, clarify or advance his understanding of Aquinas’s basic positions. This is evident, for example, in his *The Degrees of Knowledge*,⁴ where he repeatedly marshals the instrumentalist views of such philosophers of science as Emile Meyerson, Emile Picard, Pierre Duhem, Arthur Eddington and James Jeans, in support of his perinoetic/dianoetic distinction in the order of knowledge. Maritain did not hesitate to use his knowledge of French existentialism to bolster his interpretation of some of Aquinas’s key metaphysical positions.

Some critics (Gilson among them) insisted that Maritain’s interpretation of Aquinas’s metaphysics, indebted as it was to the Dominican commentators, was too essentialist in tone and therefore missed the existential thrust of Aquinas’s metaphysics of *esse*. For Gilson, faithful to the texts of Aquinas as he believed himself to be, it was not simply Maritain’s use of the commentators that was so troubling, it was Maritain’s reliance on what Gilson took to be a kind of inverted Bergsonian intuitionism. For Gilson, there is no such thing as an intuition of metaphysical being, nor can anything like it be found in the texts of Aquinas. As he strove to argue in *Being and Some Philosophers*,⁵ Aquinas’s metaphysics is built on the understanding that being primarily means *esse* or existence, a being’s act of existing, which is not to be confused with its essence. As such, *esse* cannot be grasped via simple apprehension and so cannot be known through a concept. *Esse* can only be captured or known in judgments of existence. In order to be thought conceptually and raised to the metaphysical level, *esse* must be rejoined to essence and then brought under the operations of (i) abstraction, and (ii) separation in the form of a special negative judgment. For Gilson, our ability to know *esse* is dependent on, and grounded in, pre-conceptual sensory experience. And yet, for all his adherence to Aquinian textual authority, there is no doubt that Gilson wrote *Being and Some Philosophers* with his eye on the growing popularity of French existentialism and was also significantly influenced by it.

Thus by the mid-twentieth century there were at least three well developed schools of Thomism that sought to address the philosophical challenges of the day by effecting a rapprochement or synthesis with Aquinas’s thought – (i) the Lublin school in Poland, (ii) Transcendental Thomism and (iii) Existential Thomism.

Of those who chose the overtly historicist path, in the twentieth century, we can but note here the work of Joseph Owens in Canada, John Wippel in the United States, and in Europe the expository scholarship of the well known “Participation Thomists” – Cornelio Fabro and Louis Geiger.

While renewed interest in Aquinas’s philosophy resulted in the creation of new schools of Thomism, along with the creation of considerable first rate historical scholarship, Leo XIII’s encyclical *Aeterni Patris* also had the unfortunate effect of reinforcing a manualistic style of presenting Aquinas’s thought that had first arisen in the decades following the Council of Trent. The Catholic Church at that time had a strong need to systematize doctrine in the face of the growing challenges of the Protestant faith. To that end, and because Aquinas’s philosophy played a major role in the Catholic Church’s response to Luther and Calvin, Catholic theologians devised manuals that sought to summarize Aquinas’s arguments and conclusions in ways that could be more readily absorbed by Catholic seminarians and deployed apologetically. Useful, perhaps, in their own limited way, these manuals became the standard method of presenting Aquinas’s thought in the post-Tridentine Church.

When Leo XIII made Aquinas the “official” philosopher of the Catholic Church in 1879 (to be utilized, at the time, as an intellectual force against the challenges of modernism), he inadvertently created a need for more manuals of Thomistic instruction. Whatever their value to seminarians, the continued use of manuals, as well as the manual style of instruction in Catholic seminaries and colleges in the twentieth century, did more than anything else to give Thomism and Aquinas a “bad name” among non-Catholic philosophers. These manuals were often decidedly dogmatic, uncritical and dismissive of competing views. Since their primary purpose was to indoctrinate, they, at best, contained little in the way of redeeming philosophical value.

Consequently, in spite of the creation of new schools of syncretic Thomism after *Aeterni Patris*, the manual style of privileged pleading, alas, became all too readily identified with Thomism in general. If that was the thought of Aquinas, non-Catholic philosophers argued, then it was not really worth the trouble of getting to know it any further.

Distrust of Thomism and Thomists was thus widespread among non-Catholic philosophers in the twentieth century. If distrust of Thomists was strong among the continental philosophers, it was even stronger among analytic philosophers. Analytic philosophy had, early on, acquired a reputation for being a tough minded, no-nonsense approach to philosophy, whose practitioners tended to come from backgrounds in logic, mathematics and the hard sciences. It had also acquired a reputation, early on, for being dismissive of metaphysics (at least certain “bad” kinds) as well as being hostile to religion and values.

Although today’s analytic philosophers are quick to point out that such a reputation was only, in part, deserved, both the early Wittgenstein and Russell developed philosophies whose main task was the reductive analysis of ordinary language into what they called its true logical content, which ordinary language obscured. Now the true logical content of ordinary language was comprised of complex propositions and elementary statements of fact. Since the latter were held

to represent the world as it truly is, ordinary language claims that could not be so reduced or re-written, were simply dismissed as being “metaphysical” (in the bad sense) or “value-laden” claims. Of course, Wittgenstein and Russell certainly had their own ontologies, but it was the reductive aspect of these philosophies that most appealed to their positivist successors, who would ultimately give expression to that reductionism in the form of the verification principle of meaning.

By the 1930s, then, analytic philosophy was not inclined to give any sympathetic ear to the voice of Aquinas, dependent as it was on “bad” metaphysics. Whatever their disagreements with Frege’s supposed Platonism, virtually all analytic philosophers of the period agreed with Frege’s assessment of existence, that “An affirmation of existence is in fact nothing other than a denial of the number zero.”⁶ Consequently, no self respecting analytic philosopher of the period could, in good conscience, embrace a philosophy such as Aquinas’s, a philosophy that repeatedly made the mistake of treating existence as a real property, rather than as a second order property of concepts. Nor, of course, were Thomists inclined to give any major thought to analytic philosophy, convinced as they were (wrongly, as it turned out) of analytic philosophy’s hopelessly anti-metaphysical bias.

Breaking out of its short lived love affair with logical positivism, analytic philosophy would, however, soon open up to other influences and these would eventually lead to its becoming the multifaceted philosophical community of discourse that it is today. Perhaps the most important change in this regard was effected by Wittgenstein himself, when he abandoned his earlier view of language as the mirror of reality and embraced instead a multi-functional theory of language where use determines meaning. For Wittgenstein, the task of philosophy was no longer to uncover the structures of the world through a reductive analysis of the logical structure of language, but to describe the history of language’s use. The work of the later Wittgenstein, along with the breakdown of the verificationist principle of meaning, led to the near fall of logical positivism. After the fall of logical positivism, many analytic philosophers, released from this particular philosophical straitjacket, turned to such thinkers as Aristotle, and even Aquinas, for fresh philosophical inspiration and insight. Emerging conditions thus started to arise that would set the scene for the first stage appearances of what would, belatedly, become known as “Analytic Thomism.”

Of course, as historians of analytic philosophy have pointed out,⁷ analytic philosophy, from its very inception, was informed by ideas that Aquinas would have agreed with. Frege, for example (in spite of his take on existence), defended the objectivity of knowledge, and Brentano (in some ways the father of analytic philosophy) championed the intentionality of mental states, a Scholastic idea traceable to Aquinas himself. Hence much of the support for one side of a central debate in analytic philosophy, namely, the realist/anti-realist debate, was indebted to a medieval philosopher with a Scholastic and Aristotelian background.

As analytic philosophy began to “morph” in the 1950s, it’s center of operations began to move from Cambridge to Oxford, with the work of Gilbert Ryle and J. L. Austin. Though typically not associated with Aquinas in any way, both practiced philosophy in the spirit of Aristotle, with Ryle attacking Cartesianism in his *The*

*Concept of Mind*⁸ and Austin undertaking anthropological investigations in his “Plea for Excuses”⁹ that are decidedly reminiscent of Aristotle’s method of approach. Hence these two thinkers, each in his own way, caused analytic philosophers to look more carefully at ancient sources.

One of the most pressing areas where renewal, via a reexamination of ancient sources, was felt to be sorely needed, was in ethics. Logical positivism had left ethics dependent on emotivism, non-cognitivism and utilitarianism. Their only opposition came from proponents of various tired versions of Kantian deontology. It took someone of the philosophical stature of Elizabeth Anscombe to break the impasse. She would do so by bringing virtue ethics back into the mainstream of ethical discussion. Anscombe’s 1958 article “Modern Moral Philosophy,”¹⁰ marked the beginning of a small but influential movement within analytic philosophy to make virtue ethics respectable once again. According to Anscombe, the only way to overcome the limitations of emotivism, behaviorism, utilitarianism and Kantianism, was to seek to rehabilitate the whole notion of virtue.

If Anscombe sought to challenge the general condition that ethical discourse had reached by the mid-twentieth century, instigating something of an analytic shift towards renewed interest in Aristotelian-Thomistic ethics, Peter Geach, Anscombe’s husband, also had a major impact on the analytic turn toward interest in Aquinas. Geach was, like many analytic philosophers, primarily a logician, whose *Mental Acts* (1958)¹¹ attacked both abstractionism and dispositionalism as credible positions governing the structure of mental acts. Geach in particular attacked Ryle’s *The Concept of the Mind*. Here Geach objected, on logical grounds, to Ryle’s seemingly behaviorist account of mental acts. Mental acts, said Geach, are logically distinct from mental events. Geach also rejected what he took to be the standard reading of Aquinas on abstractionism, which, for Geach, boiled down to a kind of psychologism – the mind possesses a “sense” that enables it to consult its own inner experience, from which the “sense” in question then abstracts mental concepts. According to Geach, the mind does not simply abstract concepts that are exact or identical copies of things; the mind in some sense generates concepts. In other words, the mind uses its concept-forming power to know intelligibles, but the intelligibles that it knows are in part due to the power of the mind to know them.¹² *Mental Acts*, then, along analytic lines, can be seen to make a significant contribution to a Thomistic understanding of an important foundational concept in the philosophy of mind.

This does not complete this sketch of Geach’s seminal contribution to the rise of “Analytical Thomism,” for his chapter on Aquinas in *Three Philosophers*,¹³ co-written with Elisabeth Anscombe, is of crucial significance. That chapter represented a selective examination of themes central to Aquinas’s philosophy and sought to clarify mistaken interpretations of Aquinas’s thought in much the same spirit as *Mental Acts*. One of these, which would become a key focus for other Analytical Thomists, following Geach, is the often overlooked distinction that Aquinas makes between *esse*, or being, and existence in the *an est* sense. Confusing the two, argued Geach, is said to lead to a big conceptual muddle about God’s essence being the same as his existence.

Another major figure in the analytic turn toward ancient and medieval philosophy, and Aquinas in particular, was Anthony Kenny. Kenny was a Catholic priest who studied at the Gregorian University in Rome in the 1950s. Among his professors were Peter Hoenen and Bernard Lonergan, whom he says, both aroused his interest in Aquinas's philosophy. His interest in Aquinas was further energized when he went to study with Peter Geach and Herbert McCabe at Oxford. Some of the first fruits of that study were *Action, Emotion, and Will* (1963),¹⁴ *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1969)¹⁵ and *Will, Freedom and Power* (1975),¹⁶ all of which show, in various ways, Kenny's indebtedness to Aquinas's thought. Aquinas's influence is particularly evident in Kenny's *The Metaphysics of Mind* (1989).¹⁷ In this work, Kenny draws upon many elements whose intellectual roots are to be found in Aquinas's philosophy of mind. Kenny, for example, deftly shows how Aquinas's understanding of the relation between intellect and will, body and soul, has much to offer contemporary analysts grappling with the same problems.¹⁸

Kenny's later work, *Aquinas on Being*,¹⁹ examines Aquinas's theory of being in the light of Frege's philosophy and modern linguistic analysis. Here the contribution Kenny makes now works in the opposite direction, for contemporary analytical philosophy, as Kenny sees it, shows how Aquinas's theory of being is, at bottom, fundamentally incoherent in its basic metaphysical underpinnings.

Finally, the growing interest of a minority of analytic philosophers in the philosophy of Aquinas, following in the wake of Anscombe, Geach and Kenny, caused John Haldane, one of the leading lights of British analytic thought, and himself a Catholic philosopher very interested in Aquinas, to label this approach to philosophy "Analytical Thomism." Haldane, spurred on by the fruits of the labor of Anscombe, Geach and Kenny, has, in effect, called for a fourth renewal of Thomism, which would take its revitalization from a thoroughgoing dialogue with the method and concerns of analytic philosophy. For Haldane, such a renewal is the only way to save Thomism from, (i) useful but limited historical expositions of Aquinas's philosophy, and (ii) the not very rigorous neo-Thomist philosophy coming from the successors to Gilson, Maritain and the transcendentalists. Haldane believes that analytic philosophy has much to offer Thomism, and that were Aquinas alive today, he would in fact be something of an analytic philosopher. To this end, Haldane has published a number of influential papers, helping to generate interest among some philosophers (not all Catholics by any means) as to the importance of advancing this agenda. A significant contribution to this research was made in a 1997 issue of *The Monist*,²⁰ the whole of which was devoted to the subject of Analytical Thomism. It is there, in the Prefatory Note, that Haldane gives us a working definition of Analytical Thomism, one which enables us, at last, to supply the reader with at least a broad working definition of what the phrase "Analytical Thomism" stands for:

Analytical Thomism is not concerned to appropriate St. Thomas for the advancement of any particular set of doctrines. Equally, it is not a movement of pious exegesis. Instead, it seeks to deploy the methods and ideas of 20th century philosophy – of the sort dominant within the English speaking world – in connection with the broad framework of ideas introduced and developed by Aquinas.²¹

That issue of the *Monist* was followed by another of Haldane's articles that also helped promote the call for dialogue between Thomism and analytic philosophy, this time published in *New Blackfriars* (vol. 80, 1999), as "Thomism and the Future of Catholic Philosophy."²² The *New Blackfriars* article, further articulating Haldane's call for a cross fertilization between analytic philosophy and Thomism, is followed by twelve responses from philosophers and theologians who are, for the most part, sympathetic to the broad thrust of Haldane's call.

Our volume, *Analytical Thomism: Traditions in Dialogue*, seeks to further that trend in dialogue by adding to the small list of contributions published in this relatively new field of philosophy. The editors believe that Haldane's project has considerable merit, that analytic philosophy has much to offer Thomists and others interested in the thought of Aquinas, and that Thomists ignore the latest developments in analytic philosophy at their peril. We also maintain that Haldane is "on target" concerning the present state of Scholastic philosophy, for it is once again in need of renewal. That renewal, of course, need not necessarily come from analytic philosophy alone, but surely as one of the dominant approaches to philosophy in the world these past decades, analytic philosophy must surely play a major part in this renewal.

As the chapters in this volume demonstrate, the ensuing dialogue over "future prospects" is lively and spirited. Many of the contributors take various concepts active in analytic philosophy and apply them to problems that are of deep concern to analytic philosophers and Thomists alike. Thus chapters appear on the metaphysics/theory of being; meta-ethics, free will and determinism, natural theology, philosophical anthropology/philosophical psychology, natural law theory, and so on.

There has never been a time when Thomism was not in dialogue with the philosophies of the day and Thomists have always (even the historicists) viewed Aquinas through the interpretative lenses of their own philosophical and cultural milieu. This was true in every historical phase of Thomism; during the time of the earliest commentators combating Scotus and Ockham; during the time of Cajetan and John Poinsett, and the Jesuit appropriators of Aquinas after Trent; during the time of the traditionalists and ontologists in the eighteenth century; during the time of Zigliara and Kluetgen in the nineteenth century, and certainly after *Aeterni Patris*. Far from destroying Thomism, however, we strongly believe that this kind of "mingling" has always eventually brought about a renewal of Thomistic thought updating its contextual relevance as well as furthering its conceptual advancement.

Dialogue, if genuine, ought to go out of its way to include the opinions of those who may dissent from a positive understanding of the need for a fourth Thomistic renewal via engagement with analytic philosophy. Other articles in this volume reflect the response of some neo-Thomists to the work of Analytic Thomists. Needless to say, not all neo-Thomists are convinced of the compatibility of these two philosophical approaches. Few traditional neo-Thomists, as yet, are sympathetic to Haldane's mission, as we see in the chapters by Brian Shanley, Stephen Theron and John Knasas. It has to be noted, here, that most of the interest in Analytic Thomism, so far, has come from the side of analysis, not Thomism. As

its relatively short history shows, most of the people working in this field have found their way into Analytical Thomism from analytical philosophy; few have yet to find their way into Analytical Thomism from neo-Thomism. Given that the dialogue is still in its early stages, perhaps this demographic, given time, will change.

Be that as it may, perhaps the real value of a volume like this lies in its having, at the very least, drawn the attention of neo-Thomists to the work of analysts who use analytic philosophy to argue for many of the positions that Aquinas defended, and who as a result may now decide to look more carefully at the many riches of analytic philosophy itself. Clearly the former have found much that is of value in Aquinas. At the same time, we hope, Analytical Thomists too will consider, more carefully, the objections to Analytical Thomism raised by neo-Thomists and seek, in future, to more fully address them.

Notes

- 1 John Haldane, "Thomism and the Future of Catholic Philosophy," *New Blackfriars* 80 (April 1999), 164.
- 2 Haldane, "Thomism," 164.
- 3 For an excellent overview of the history of the development of Transcendental Thomism, see Gerald McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1989).
- 4 Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, Gerald B. Phelan, trans. (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959).
- 5 Étienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1952).
- 6 Gottlob Frege, *Foundations of Arithmetic*, J. L. Austin, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), 51.
- 7 For an excellent recent overview of the historical background to Analytical Thomism, see Fergus Kerr's "Aquinas and Analytic Philosophy: Natural Allies?" in *Modern Theology* 20:1 (2004), 123–39.
- 8 Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949).
- 9 J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, J. O. Urmson & G. J. Warnock, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).
- 10 Elizabeth Anscombe, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, Vol. III (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981).
- 11 Peter Geach, *Mental Acts: Their Content and Their Objects* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).
- 12 Kerr, "Aquinas," 134–35.
- 13 Peter Geach, "Aquinas," in G. E. M. Anscombe & P. T. Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961).
- 14 Anthony Kenny, *Action, Emotion and Will* (London: Routledge, 1963).
- 15 Kenny, ed. *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976).
- 16 Kenny, *Will, Freedom and Power* (London: Routledge, 1975).
- 17 Kenny, *Metaphysics of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

- 18 See also Kenny's *Aquinas On Mind* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1993).
- 19 Kenny, *Aquinas On Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 20 John Haldane, ed. "Analytical Thomism," *The Monist* 80:4 (1997).
- 21 Haldane, Prefatory Note.
- 22 Haldane, "Thomism," 164.

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Chapter One

Aquinas, God and Being

David Braine

1. Introduction

Some critics, while praising Aquinas on many counts, have concluded that his view of God's eternity and immutability depends upon a misconceived Platonism, consequently, his explanations of God's so-called "simplicity" are based on sophistry and illusion.¹ Against this, I present Aquinas's views as the coherent whole I believe them to be, his later works showing some development as well as greater indulgence in metaphor.

The prologue of the *Summa theologiae* makes it plain that Aquinas is speaking as a theologian, giving an exposition of sacred doctrine, intending to speak of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In considering the names of God in *ST I*, q. 13, all the names considered are concrete and of the sort theologians use – he is strong, wise and good, that he is a lion or a stone of stumbling, that he is Lord, Savior and Creator, rightly called God and He Who Is.

It is of the essence of this God to be a living God and it is in keeping with this that Aquinas conceives God's existing and living in terms of the notion of an act or activity. God's act or activity of being, in Latin his *actus essendi*, is his activity of living, is his activity of knowing and understanding, is his activity of loving. It is a unitary or simple *actus*, act or activity, with many aspects, inasmuch as we speak of it as being, living, knowing, loving, and so on according to the respect in which the being, living, knowing, loving, and so on of creatures resemble it. The facts that God is, that he lives, that he knows, and so on, are all distinct facts stated in different propositions, but these propositions are all made true by one unitary actuality.

This *actus*, Aquinas understands to be the act of a subsistent thing, the word *actus* serving as a translation of Aristotle's word *energeia*. In the modern logical sense, this act or activity is a particular, not in the sense of being a member of a wider group of particulars, but in the sense of being logically a singular act, not a kind of act. This *energeia* of being is the furnace which gives and maintains being and vigor in all things. It is in no way an abstract entity. Therefore there is for him no resemblance at all between the kind of immutability possessed by God and the immutability which belongs to abstract objects such as general properties and numbers. General properties and numbers are incapable of exercising any causal action or of suffering any passion because they are merely abstract in character – objects only of the mind.

Aquinas considers eternity, not simply negatively as non-temporality, but as a form of life, in particular as complete and perfect possession all in one act of a life without beginning or end. God's immutability is not a *stasis* contrasting with movement within the world of moving things, but arises from his being pure activity.

Much modern consideration of eternity by believers has been very superficial. Many have come to argue that immutability is incompatible with thinking of God as living and personal, usually on the basis that life and personhood involve not only intellect but also emotion and responsiveness to other persons, in particular to changeable free human beings.² These arguments, however, seem to depend on supposing that we ought to be able to imagine what it is like for God to live his life, as if to be able to empathize with God, something which traditional theism has always excluded, insisting on God's unimagability and incomprehensibility.

True, in the Scriptures of those many religions which hold that God is unimagable and incomprehensible, the same God often speaks of himself and is spoken of in very anthropomorphic ways. In Hebrew scripture he is spoken of as walking in the garden of paradise, of resolving on things and then relenting, and of exercising motherly care. Each of these three cases has been explained, each in a different way. In Christian tradition, Jesus in his humanity has been taken as the chosen image of whatever in God is expressed in the language of the emotions. But this does not make us able to feel what it feels like to live God's life.

These doctrines of God's simplicity and immutability are shared with Muslims. They reject any idea of Allāh having added qualifications, or of his attributes being separate from his being, or of his being subject to change or changeable. These doctrines are part of any orthodox Jewish, Christian or Muslim doctrine of God. Modern philosophers' difficulties spring from their trying to imagine things which according to this shared tradition are necessarily unimagable. Their fight is not primarily with God's simplicity and eternity, but with his unimagability and incomprehensibility, data in this tradition. These data have the consequence that every positive statement about God has to be understood as subject to negative qualifications, so that in the words of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 "between Creator and creature no likeness can be expressed without implying a greater unlikeness."

Modern criticism of the idea of eternity is also superficial because it fails to take account of the underlying structure of the relationship between God and creation.

Firstly, in our understanding of the world of bodily or physical things, temporality has become increasingly inseparable from a causal order within which space and time are wrapped together. It is therefore not credible that time should have any existence separate from the whole physical created order; and therefore, if this order has been given existence by a creator, then the same creator must have in the same act concreated time (I say "concreated" since it is the things of nature that are created and time with them, and not time that is created as an independent thing within which the things of nature come to be). Therefore there can be no sense in describing God as present in time, except in the sense that the whole of him in his simple unity is immediate to that to which he gives being at any particular place and time, as the agent who is internal and immediate to this action of giving being.

One of the blind spots of those who try to temporalize God is that their view involves a Time which embraces both God and creation and this involves, contrary to relativity theory, that simultaneity is always absolute throughout space independently of observers. Relativity theory reinforces the awareness shared by Augustine and Aquinas of the inseparability of time from the natural created universe. Physically, being past, present or future are always in relation to a juncture in space and time; there is no absoluteness in temporal relations in nature except within the “time-cones” familiar in presentations of relativity theory, and as causal order requires, which excludes circles in causation.

Secondly, even in the most sophisticated of proposed physical theories, ones in which there are nine or ten dimensions of space, time still stands alone in a unique relation to them. And our whole understanding of physical causal order, including our understanding of what is involved in experimentation, depends upon a cause having effects which are later than its action. That is, it is our understanding of causal action, and not only what notions we may have about the contingency of the future, whether arising from free will or from any supposed existence of absolute chance, which requires the reality of time. The future relative to any juncture in space and time does not yet exist and is not already established in the sense that the past is established, for even though what is past to a juncture no longer exists at that juncture, this past is still then established in some way which sets it together with what is present in that juncture, in contrast with what is future to that juncture. If the future is open so that there is some real contingency or undeterminedness about it, this depends upon the fact that it does not yet exist. Accordingly, any God who gives existence to nature must also be a God who makes nature continue in existence. But nothing in time or in any way localized in time can do anything to make itself or anything else exist in the future. Only a non-temporal upholder can uphold the temporal order.

Logically, it is possible for someone to say that nature goes on of itself, by what Norman Kretzmann calls “existential inertia,”³ so that there is no need for it to be explained by there being a non-temporal upholder, *but to say this is just to give no explanation, not to give an alternative explanation*. And many philosophers make very queer remarks about existence needing no more explanation than non-existence, even when it is a matter of the existence of a universe whose nature is to reliably continue. The possibility of saying such things, however, does not effect the conclusion that here, *if* anything is to be able to uphold things in existence, to cause their continuance, it has to be non-temporal.⁴

2. The Being of God and the Being of Creatures as Acts or Activities

2(a) *Being as an Act or Activity*

When Aquinas speaks of the simplicity of God, he is denying that there is any distinction between the actuality of his existing and the actuality, for instance, of his knowing or loving.

By contrast, in considering creatures we have to make a distinction between their act of being as substances and their acts of accidental being. Thus in considering the *esse* of a creaturely self-standing bodily substance, such as a human being, as we shall see, Aquinas's view is that it consists primarily of what is involved in its being a human being, since for him "life is a particular form of *esse*, specified by the relevant living principle" (*Quodl.* 9). However, in addition to this, "through superadded acts," creaturely substances "have being (*esse*) *secundum quid* (according to something), as being white signifies being according to something" which he explains in terms of the actualization of being white presupposing the actual existence of the substance which is white (*ST* I, q. 5, a. 1). More particularly in *SCG* I, 28, he says "any excellence of anything attaches to it according with its *esse*. No excellence would attach to a human being from his wisdom unless because of it he were (*esset*) wise," and, in the *Summa theologiae*, "the good can be more or less according to some supervening *actus*, for example, according to knowledge or virtue" – that is, a human being is more or less in some accidental respect, for instance in being more or less knowledgeable or virtuous.⁵

Thus whereas in God the acts of knowing, understanding and loving are each identical with his act of being and living (and therefore also with each other), by contrast, in human beings (and in any other created intellectual beings, for example, angels) all acts of knowing, understanding and loving are acts by which the created substance concerned has accidental being superadded or supervening upon its being as a substance. They are ways in which the human being or other created substance is more fully (that is, is enriched in being or has fuller existence).

This resolves the people's puzzle as to how he can speak of degrees of being, for example, in his statement of the argument of his Fourth Way,⁶ which represents each perfection as existing in varying degrees in creatures. Aquinas argues that the supreme cause of these perfections as they exist in lesser degree in creatures must be something which exemplifies them in a maximal way, namely God, the first cause of being.

Quite evidently, if *esse* is conceived of as the most general common predicate shared by all things (*res*), it could not serve to characterize God. But Aquinas explicitly and repeatedly argues that God's act of being is not the common predicate, *ens*,⁷ predicated of every thing (*res*), that is of every *ens* from any of the ten categories.

If *esse* is conceived of as an act or activity in the way I have explained, however, there is no incoherence in holding that God's *esse* can have nothing added to it because his activity of being, which is the same activity as his activity of living, is also the same activity as his understanding and loving. In God his life consists in his understanding and loving, whereas in creatures these activities of understanding and loving are accidents, superadded activities supervening upon their being and living as substances.

If a substance's *esse* can indeed be conceived of as an activity, and if this expression does not always have to refer to a predicate of some kind, Kenny's problem⁸ as to how *esse* or "being" are the most empty of predicates that can characterize God or be such that nothing can be added to them, is quite unreal. For

it is a problem which only arises from rejecting the idea of *esse* as an act or activity as something absolutely distinct from *esse* signifying being as the subject of a proposition.

2(b) Subsistences as Alone in Having *Esse* as an Act

From the beginning Aquinas gives pride of place to the primary subject, that is a subject which is not itself either predicated of or present in any other subject, that which Aristotle says is primarily and chiefly called *ousia* – in modern writings commonly called first substance. When he particularly needs to avoid ambiguity, Aquinas uses the word *subsistentia* to indicate these first substances defined in this way (and therefore also as his translation of the Greek *hypostasis*). He also refers to them as “particular subsistences,” “substances which subsist through themselves” (*substantiae per se subsistenti*), or as Kenny puts it “self-standing substances.” Aquinas’s dissatisfaction with the word *substantia* arises from its being the standard translation of the Greek word *ousia*, which often denotes something abstract, a thing’s nature or its “what it is,” what he calls *essential* – an object to be comprehended and typically expressed in a definition, which he also refers to as *quidditas* and sometimes *forma*.⁹

He is never deflected from the insistence, already clear in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, that nothing has *esse* except particular subsistences, self-standing in the sense that they have *esse* in themselves and not in something else – unlike prime matter, forms or any universal.¹⁰ We can see this in his sensitivity to the distinction between *esse* and *ens*. Thus *Lectio II* of his *Commentary on Boethius’ De Hebdomadibus* is particularly instructive.¹¹ There he tells us that “just as we cannot say that *currere* itself runs, so we cannot say that *esse* itself is” while “just as we can say of that which runs or of the running thing (*currente*) that it runs inasmuch as it is the subject of running and itself participates in it, so we can say that a particular being (*ens* or *id quod est*) participates in an *actus essendi*.” He says further that *esse* “is participated in by other things, but does not itself participate in anything else,” and makes it clear that when we say that an *ens* participates in *esse*, the *ens* is spoken of concretely while *esse*, spoken of as something participated in, is spoken of abstractly.

He is constantly insistent that, as he says in *ST I*, q. 39, a. 5, “if we wish to speak with truth, we must take into account not only the things which are signified, but also the mode of their signification.” There he continues:

although, if we consider the thing (*res*) concerned, God (*Deus*) is the same as deity (*deitas*, often translated Godhead), nonetheless the mode of signification is not the same in each case. For, this word God (*Deus*) because it signifies this divine essence as in him that possesses it, from its mode of signification naturally has it that it can stand for a person ... but this word *essentia* [and he evidently means to generalize about all abstract words for God’s essence including the word *deitas*] from its mode of signification does not have it that it can stand for a person because it signifies the essence as an abstract form.¹²

This distinction between (i) the perfections signified by the non-metaphorical predicates we use of God and (ii) their *modus significandi*, introduced in *STI*, q. 13, a. 3, where all the time he is thinking of the concrete names of God (concretely predicated of God as a subsistent being in composite propositions formed about God without implying that he is composite (q. 13, a. 12)), underlies all his discussion of the names of God and of the three divine Persons.

We see this refusal to be deflected from his insistence that nothing has *esse* except particular subsistences even in his treatment of the Trinity. For Aquinas, there are three distinct singular subjects [*supposita*] which are primary in the sense explained above. Each is a *subsistentia* or *hypostasis*, in God, the three Persons of the Trinity, so it might seem to us a problem as to what might be the foundation of their unity. To this his answer is that they are one because they have the same *esse* not because they have the same *essentia*.¹³ By contrast, when creatures are non-identical, this is because they do not have the same *esse*, so that even if they share the same *essentia*, this is only according to *ratio*, that is as something abstract like, attributes predicable of more than one thing. In the case of God, his *essentia* is not something abstract, general or possible but has the same logical particularity and concreteness as his *esse*.

2(c) The Secondary Character of the *Esse* of Accidents and of Forms

Aquinas's distinction between (i) being an *ens* in the sense of being a subject of affirmative predication, without necessarily positing anything in reality, and (ii) being an *ens* in the sense of being one of the things in the ten categories which posit something in reality, is quite standard in all his works, appearing first in *De ente et essentia*. From the *Commentary on the Sentences* onwards, however, he states the distinction as primarily a distinction between ways of using the word *esse* and only derivatively as between ways of using the word *ens*.¹⁴ It is thereafter understood as a distinction between *esse* as what is signified by the composition of a proposition and *esse* as an act of being (*actus essendi*).

In the expression *actus essendi*, *essendi* is the genitive of *essendum*, a gerund which correspond to *est* in the way that “destroying” corresponds to “destroy” in English, by contrast with other related nouns such as *essentia* which would be grammatically more analogous to such nouns as “destruction.” By *actus* he meant an individual act or *energeia* of a subsistent thing; one might say a concrete act or activity, not anything of a kind which could be ascribed to abstract forms or numbers. In *Quodl.* 9, 2, 2 (3), this kind of *esse* is described as the *actus* of an *essentia*, implying a way of thinking in which in the case of creatures, *essentia* and *esse* are conceived of as being related analogously as potency to act.¹⁵ This *esse*, however, is an *actus*, is an actualization, not an attribute of the *essentia* conceived as a potency; rather, it is an attribute of the thing which has this *esse*, that is, of the subsistent thing which is said to *be* in the way concerned.

The idea that things in categories other than substance, that is, accidents, posit something in reality may sound puzzling to us, and likewise the idea that they have a concrete act of being in the way I have spoken of. But when Aquinas speaks of

accidental being or the being of accidents, for example, the being of wisdom, he does not have in mind the being or existence of wisdom as an abstract or independently existing entity, but of something's being wise. It therefore remains only substances which exercise even accidental being. Thus the argument of *SCG* I, 28, which I cited earlier, is an anti-Platonic argument to the effect that if a person's wisdom were a separate entity in its own right it would be useless in contributing to his excellence (*nobilitas*), for no excellence would come to a person from his wisdom unless in virtue of it he was wise (speech about wisdom needing to be understood in terms of speech about things which are wise).¹⁶ In understanding Aquinas here we should remember that, for him as for Aristotle, being is signified whenever we have the assertion of a predicate about a subject, whether the copula is used or not. Thus Aristotle tells us that it makes no difference whether one says "walks" or "is walking" (in Greek the simple present has the sense of the English continuous present). So if the accident concerned was not wisdom, but walking, we could say that no action comes to a person from his walking (or posits anything in reality) unless in virtue of it he walks – and, since "walks" means the same as "is walking," for him to walk is for him to be walking, that is, to exercise *esse* in an accidental respect.

For Aquinas it is in principle only things with positive being or existence in some way that have essences – such that one can inquire of them – not just what the word for them means, but what they are in the sense of seeking a definition of their essence.¹⁷ The simple absence of something is not something with an essence requiring definition, and this is true in the case of accidents such as blindness or simple not knowing¹⁸ just as much where the case is one of the absence of a substance (as with a hole or empty space). Being sighted or knowledgeable are assets to Socrates, whereas being blind and lacking knowledge are not. The word "asset" nicely enshrines the association of positive being with being as a way of being good, upon which Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas agree.

It is only by reference to Aristotle that we can understand his way of thinking even as it appears in *De ente*, where he says "Because the word *ens* is said absolutely and with priority of substances, and only posteriorly and with qualification of accidents, essence is in substances truly and properly, in accidents only in some way with qualification" and that accidents "have an incomplete definition because they cannot be defined unless a subject is placed in their definition." For Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, the use of the word "being" in regard to accidents is related to its use in regard to substances in a parallel way to that in which the use of the word "healthy" in regard to what is productive of health is related to its use of healthy animals, and this excludes its being counted as used equivocally. Because of this, an accident, in Aquinas's later works, is called an *ens* only analogically.

Accidents, however, are not the only seemingly abstract things with positive existence and definitions so as to count as constituting essences whose *esse* is an *actus*, since Aquinas's way of thinking of the being of accidents is easily carried over, via the use of abstract terms, to other kinds of form spoken of. Thus when non-accidental forms are concerned, such as humanity, its existence does not in his

conception consist in the existence of an abstract or separate object – humanity or Man – but in something’s being human. In general “*esse* belongs both to the subject (*hypostasis*) and to the nature, to the subject as to that which has *esse*, and to the nature as to that by which something has *esse*, ... as by whiteness something is white, and by humanity someone is human” (*ST* III, q. 17, a. 2). And we have seen how in the case of God, it is to God and the persons of the Trinity, spoken of concretely that *esse* primarily belongs, and to *deitas* only in virtue of applying to *Deus* (God).

3. Being as Consisting in Being the Subject of a True Affirmative Predication

3(a) *Esse as Merely Signifying the Composition of Subject and Predicate*

When modern logicians concern themselves with existence, they mainly speak of it as a presupposition or alternatively say that to be “is to be the value of a bound variable” or, on more traditional lines, that it is to be the subject of a true affirmative predication. Frege speaks of it as a second-level property, the denial of the number nought, but as we shall see such denial arises as a consequence of existence as defined in the other ways.

Existence in this sense is represented in Aquinas as the use of the word *esse* merely to signify the composition of subject and predicate, that is, to signify the truth of a proposition. For, in Aquinas, always the main distinction is between *esse* as positing something in reality – that is *esse* as an *actus essendi* (whether substantial or accidental) of self-standing substances – and this *esse* as merely signifying the composition of subject and predicate. The substantial/accidental distinction is subsidiary by comparison.

What counts as an *ens* (the participle denoting something which is) entirely depends on what we say is (*est*). A thing is an *ens* only in as much as it is (*est*) or is (*est*) something or other, and in both cases Aquinas says that *esse* is predicated of it or that it has *esse*. In reading Aquinas we have to accept that he treats some differences in mode of speech which modern writers carefully distinguish as unimportant in many contexts. Aquinas lays no emphasis on the distinction between a thing’s being and its being something or other – or therefore between *esse* where we might think it expressed existence and *esse* when the copula is concerned (as when what we have is being a man, being human, being white (that is, of a certain quality) or being something where one of the other categories or kinds of predicate is concerned). Obviously if a thing *is something or other*, it is a subject of predication, and therefore *is (simpliciter)*, that is, exists in some way, whatever the *summum genus* or logical type to which it might be supposed to belong. So there is nothing objectionable in the fact that his ways of speaking are often ambiguous as between the two so long as this does not trip him into false conclusions.

When he speaks of the things which have this *esse* in the sense in which it merely signifies the composition of subject and predicate, again he should not be

interpreted as referring to a kind of *esse* which is signified only when the copula is present, since he is not speaking of the lexical meaning of the copula. For, as we saw, following Aristotle, he takes being to be signified whenever we have the assertion of a predicate about a subject, whether the copula is used or not. In his late commentary on the *Metaphysics* passage in which Aristotle says that it makes no difference whether one says “walks” or “is walking,” Aquinas takes Aristotle’s immediate concern to be with precisely this use of *esse* merely to signify the truth of a proposition, such as we express by saying “it is the case that ...”¹⁹

In the *Summa theologiae*, he gives the proposition “God is” as his immediate example, although he has examples of many other types. He tells us elsewhere that, when demonstrative reasons lead our mind to form the kind of proposition about God which expresses that God is (in his account, reasoning from effects to their cause) so that God’s *esse* is a subject of proof, the *esse* here signified is of the kind which consists only in the truth of a proposition, not that *esse* of God by which he subsists, and so not that *esse* which he says is identical with God’s *essentia* (*SCG* I, 12).

The same explanation of being as consisting in the truth of a proposition is key to Aquinas’s conception of privations. Thus a privation such as blindness is said to exist only in the sense that we can form true propositions about it. It does not exist as a thing in virtue of which something has actual being. This is indeed one of the key elements in his treatment of the problem of evil. Privations are things which exist not by God’s operation but only by his permission: they are not objects of his causation in giving being or to which his primary causation is directed (for example, as it is directed to positive realizations of the natures of the things he creates and upholds, the realizations in terms of which the powers belonging to these natures are defined). Again, in a very different case, although we can say that Christ’s human nature exists, he says that this only means that we can form true propositions about it, not that it has an *actus essendi* of any kind, let alone the *actus essendi* or *esse* of a self-subsisting substance – this latter kind of *esse* belongs to the person of Christ who is indeed human, but it is the person which has this *esse* in the sense of *actus essendi*, not the human nature (*Quodl.* 9, 2; cf. *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2).

There might seem to be a quite general problem as to the status of such things as the human nature in which Plato and Socrates both share or have in common, alongside the problems of the status of rationality which is said to be logically prior to human nature as part of its definition, and in general of any topics of discourse described as in the mind, as having *esse intentionale*, or as *entia rationis* – three expressions each with a different meaning.

What Aquinas holds, however, seems quite clear. We can speak of any of these things as having *esse* in the sense of involving an act of being insofar as we mean some *esse* which a substance has through them, for example, of Plato’s existing or Socrates’ existing as human and rational things, or of a person’s act of conceiving or thinking of an abstract object or of a fictional entity. It is then just as with wisdom: wisdom has real existence inasmuch as there is accidental *actus essendi* in each of the persons who is wise. However, if in saying “Wisdom exists” we had in view only the kind of *esse* expressed in “Wisdom is a positive attribute” understood in a parallel way to “Blindness is a privation,” “A thousand thousands is a number”

or “Cerberus is a mythical beast,” then nothing more would be involved than being a subject of true predication.

To sum up, things with mental or intentional *esse* and *entia rationis* do not *as such* have any act of being but only the *esse* which expresses the composition of a proposition associated with any grammatical subject of predicates – they only have an act of being in so far as this is the act of being, substantial or accidental, of some substance.

3(b) How Aquinas’s Thought Stands in Relation to Frege’s Distinction Between First Order and Second Order Predicates: How Aquinas Understands the Unity of God

In considering Aquinas’s treatment of the being and unity of God, we should begin with Frege and his distinction between (1) properties of the things which fall under concepts such as the properties of particular horses and (2) properties of concepts such as that horses are a million in number or that horses exist.²⁰

Accordingly we must distinguish between unity as a property of an object, conceived in terms of unitedness, integration or absence of composition, and unity as when we say that there is just one thing of a certain kind. In the case of God, unity in the first sense is realized in God’s simplicity, whereas unity in the second sense (what Scotus calls *unicitas* or uniqueness) is realized in there being one God rather than no God or many Gods.

The problem in understanding Aquinas’s treatment of the unity of God in the second sense arises from his thinking it to be an implication of his simplicity, that is God’s unity in the first sense. But here as Frege says “it would be going too far to assert that we can never infer from the component characteristics of a concept to oneness of existence; what is true is that this can never be in as direct a manner as it is to assign some component of a concept as a property to an object falling under it” (*Grundlagen*, para. 53). And we shall find that Aquinas does not violate Frege’s requirement.

Aquinas’s treatment of the unity of God is obscured by his acceptance of a principle which he shares with Aristotle and Leibniz – if immaterial intellectual beings are to differ numerically, they must also differ qualitatively, differing in essence and not just by accidents. It is in this form that Aquinas applies what is known as the principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles not only to God but also to the angels.

Yet this principle does not seem intrinsically necessary. We can conceive of God creating two angels identical in essence and the one of them accepting God’s friendship and the other like the devil rejecting it. They would differ in an accidental respect which enabled others apart from the creator to know which was which, but it would not be this that made them different but God’s having created them as distinct, knowing each of them as distinct in the way an agent, here, the giver of being, knows his own act. Moreover, he would still have known them as distinct even if they had not chosen differently and could not be discriminated between other creatures. However, it is a question of what we can think of or conceive, not of what we can imagine.²¹ Since *ex hypothesi* we are speaking of

immaterial beings we should no more expect to imagine angels as distinct than to imagine any angel at all. And it does not seem logically incoherent to suppose that God in his absolute power might have created specifically identical angels whose distinct identity was known to him alone.

This brings into doubt the applicability of the principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles to angels, that is, it brings into doubt the correctness of Aquinas's supposition that the essence of each angel is logically a particular individual actuality – that in angels as well as in God *ens* and *essentia* are identical. If this supposition is incorrect, then, when Aquinas argues that God is unique for the same reason that he gives for each angel being unique, this argument will be inadequate.

It would seem, however, that Aquinas has available to him a much deeper reason for thinking that there can be only one God, or a deeper reason for applying the principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles to God rather than to the angels. This deeper reason arises from the fact that for him, not only is the *esse* of the God whom we identify as creator logically a particular individual actuality, but, because there is no real distinction between the essence or nature of this God and his *esse*, this essence or nature of God must also be logically a particular individual actuality. Accordingly there is no way in which two or more distinct subjects could share the divine essence or nature without sharing the same act of being, that is, sharing the same *esse*. This is precisely what Aquinas supposes to be the case with the three Persons of the Trinity in which he and other Christians believe, and, as we noted earlier, it is precisely their sharing the same *esse* which for him prevents them from counting as distinct things. Nothing then could share the divine essence or nature without being one thing, sharing one *esse*, with the Trinity.

Thus it is principally or solely in virtue of the identity or absence of real distinction between God's *esse* and his *essentia* that this *essentia* of God must be logically a particular individual actuality and that there can be only one God. This reason is absent from Aquinas's consideration of the question as to whether there is only one angel of each species.

That God's essence, that is God under the aspect of an object of understanding, should be logically a particular individual actuality, is vital to the possibility of God's being the object of intellectual vision for the angels and saints. In being logically a particular individual actuality, God's essence differs from any essence that we ordinarily conceive. All the essences which we ordinarily conceive are at least in principle capable of being exemplified either in no substance at all or in more than one substance. We typically envisage them as being explained and capable of being made comprehensible through expression in terms of general predicates, although the ways of explaining *differentiae* may be very different from those typified in Aristotelian and medieval examples.

In sum, in Aquinas's position, the identity of God's *esse* with his essence of itself makes it impossible that there should be more than one God, since any subject sharing the divine essence would exist by the same act of being as the persons of the Trinity, so that the only pertinent question to be raised is whether there could have been more than three Persons in the Godhead, not whether there could be one or more other divine beings distinct and separate from the one God whom Christians

believe to be three Persons. Because he accepted the principle of the identity of indiscernibles as applied to immaterial things in general, even the angels, Aquinas always proceeds by proving the identity of God with his essence first, a characteristic which he thinks the angels share, and only afterwards separately proving the identity of God's *esse* and his *essentia*. Accordingly he experienced no need to appeal to the identity of God's *esse* and his *essentia* in order to prove that there is only one God. Instead he limited himself to arguments based on the identity of God as *ens*, the subject of *esse*, with his essence.

Yet on examination, his first two arguments for this identity of *esse* as God's activity of being and his *essentia*, the argument from causation and from the relation of act and potency, are independent of any consideration of whether God is his essence. Therefore the deeper argument based on this identity of *esse* and *essentia* in God was entirely available to him.

Neither this deeper argument to God's unity in the sense of uniqueness, nor the argument based on the identity of indiscernible immaterial things, involves treating God's unity as a property of an object rather than as a second order predicate. And it is the latter Fregean view which best accords with Aquinas's recognition of multitude and absence of multitude as among the transcendentals, attributes applying to predicates irrespective of category.

It is, therefore, on Aquinas's treatment of God's *esse*, not his treatment of God's unity, that we should concentrate our attention. Here logicians tend to make two mistakes.

3(c) *The First Mistake of Some Logicians*

Frege tells us "Affirmation of existence is in fact nothing but denial of the number nought," so that existence, like number, is a property of a concept. Frege and his followers have supposed that the existence expressed by "there is ..." and "there are ..." is a second level property, a property of kinds of thing and not of things, exemplified in "There are horses" (or equivalently "Horses exist"). Some of his followers have set it in contrast with what they call existence as an actuality as supposedly a first order property possessed only by individuals, an actuality exemplified by Napoleon after his conception or birth but not before. But here the logicians concerned have been misled. There was a time before horses existed just as there was a time before Napoleon existed.

The existence of horses when they came to exist consisted in the existence of individual horses. In general, the existence which is presupposed when we take some kind of thing as a subject of generalization, is the same in character as the existence presupposed when we take some individual of the kind concerned as the subject of our questions and statements. And what it is for a thing to exist depends upon what kind of thing it is. Plainly what it is for a horse such as Bucephalus or Red Rum to exist is quite different from what it is for the number four to exist and this again is different from what it is for the color red to exist.

The statements of logicians about existence, however, are not consistent. Quine was closer to the mark when he said – not that existence is a property of a concept

such as is expressed by the existential quantifier – but that “to be is to be the value of a bound variable” which is expressed by accepting a symbol as the name of such a value. For when we generalize about a kind of thing (or in the language of formal logic take this kind of thing as the domain or range of our quantifiers), existence belongs primarily to the things within this range, not to the kind of thing or domain concerned.²² For the existence of an entity, *e*, to be presupposed, both propositions – “*e* is *F*” and “*e* is not *F*” – are required as truth conditions, and in general a presupposition is a condition of the truth of a proposition and its proper negation. In the symbolism of predicate logic the existence of *e* is represented by taking *e* as a subject of predication – “*e* is *F*” or in customary logical symbolism “*Fe*” – not by treating it as logically a predicate to be represented by such predicate-letters as *F* or *G*. Quine formulates the matter, “to be is to be the value of a bound variable,” because if an entity, *e*, is within the relevant domain of generalization *R*, then in the symbolism with which distinguishing free and bound variables is associated, “All *R* are *F*” is symbolised “ $(\forall x)(Fx)$ ” which implies “*Fe*” and this latter implies “Some *R* is *F*” symbolised “ $(\exists x)(Fx)$.”

Accordingly, rather than saying that to assert existence is to deny the number nought, we should say that it is to assert *that in virtue of which* it is correct to deny the number nought. It is because particular horses, Bucephalus, Foxhunter and Red Rum have existed that it is wrong to say no horses have existed. Further, if we consider accidental unities such as the Light Brigade, it becomes particularly plain that existence is associated primarily with the object, not with a concept, since we can equally well say that that one brigade, those four companies or those six hundred men, was or were sent on that famous charge (this does not affect the principle that whenever objects are identified or counted it has to be under a concept). Moreover, Christian doctrine teaches that three divine Persons are one God.

Further, what is wrong with the ontological argument is not that existence is a property of concepts and not an attribute of objects, but that it is an attribute of objects presupposed by any true affirmative predication about them. If we say God is good, we presuppose, in attributing goodness to him, that he exists, and if we say that he exists we presuppose his existence in attributing it to him. Grammatically we predicate existence primarily of objects, and logically also it is to objects, not kinds of object, that it is primarily attributed.

3(d) *The Second Mistake of Logicians*

I said that Quine was closer to the mark in saying that to be is to be the value of a bound variable, that is, that to be is to be a singular subject of predication rather than to treat being as a property of concepts. Although closer to the mark, however, this view is not yet right. For just as to assert existence was not just to deny the number nought but to assert *that in virtue of which* it was correct to deny the number nought, so also it is not just to assert that a thing is a singular subject of predication but to assert *that in virtue of which* it is such a subject. The kind of existence which is presupposed involves very different things in reality, and the

statements of the existence concerned have very different senses in different types of case.

If one is asked “Do or did dragons breathe out fire or not?” the answer should be that dragons have never existed – or, since the word “dragon” is being used as if it were the name of a natural kind – that there has never been any such kind of animal. If one were asked “Does or did Cerberus use all his three mouths to eat with or only one or two of them?” the answer should be that there has never been any such dog as Cerberus. But likewise, if one is asked “Is the number which is one greater than three and one less than four even or odd?” the answer should be that there is no such number.

When we ask such questions about kinds of thing or individual things, whether concrete or abstract, we presuppose the existence of things of the kind concerned or of the individual concerned. Statements of the existence or non-existence of kinds of thing or of particular individual things, therefore, all have the same implication that the kind of thing or particular thing concerned is or is not a proper subject of questions and therefore of statements. In the cases of non-existence which I have just instanced, we say that the presupposition of existence fails because the things concerned are mythical, ideal, imaginary or fictional. In the case of things that have existed in the past but no longer exist, in statements as to their present states, activities, and so on, the presupposition of existence fails because the individuals concerned are dead or the species or class concerned is extinct.

Thus existence is something presupposed whenever we use a name in formal logic to denote a particular value of a variable within the range of the quantifiers in a particular use, that is, to denote something within the range over which a certain class of generalizations are liable to be made. It is therefore also presupposed whenever we speak of a general kind of thing, taking it as the range over which we are quantifying in each particular case in which we use the quantifiers.

However, although to exist *implies* being a genuine subject of discourse, it is a great mistake to suppose that this is what it *means*.

What is being denied in regard to dragons and Cerberus is not just that they are genuine subjects of discourse but that they ever have had any existence amongst concrete or real beings – it is not being denied that they have had existence as numbers, as objects of ancient Greek belief or simply as topics or subjects of discourse (without regard to their kind). Likewise, in the number example mentioned, the denial of existence is merely concerned with the fact that there is *no such number*. It is not concerned with stating anything so general as that there is *no such subject of discourse* to have questions raised about it.

True, then, the propositions that horses exist, that the horse Bucephalus did exist, that the number greater than three and less than five does exist, for each presupposes that their subjects are genuine topics for questions to be asked about and also that they are genuine subjects for predications to be made about them (rather than mythical, ideal, imaginary or fictional, or at the relevant time extinct or dead). But it does not follow that this is the whole sense of these propositions. On the contrary, their sense is quite different in different cases. In some cases this includes the positing of something as “existing in reality,” to use Aquinas’s phrase,

and in other cases to do nothing of the kind. For a number to exist is only for it to be a number among the other numbers, which posits nothing as existing in concrete reality, whereas as Aristotle says for a horse to exist is for it to live.

To sum up, we must distinguish between the metalinguistic statement that a named object is a subject of predication (that is, its existence is presupposed when we ask questions about it) and the non-metalinguistic statement of its existence. And in the case of statements of concrete existence, the reality which makes them true will be a concrete actuality. Thus the reality which makes it true that God exists is God's activity of being and living, and the reality which makes it true that an animal exists, is its activity of living. No reality or actuality makes it true that a number exists and therefore no reality or actuality is required to have any kind of actuality in order for a number to exist.

Thus there is no incompatibility between two different kinds of thesis: (1) the metalinguistic generalizations that (a) a certain kind of possession of existence is presupposed by any predication about a subject of discourse (whatever its kind), (b) this kind of possession of existence in every case stands in a different logical situation from the attribution of anything else to the thing concerned, and that this holds true independently of whether the existence concerned is that of a concrete or an abstract object; and (2) the metaphysical generalization that the positive ways of being or existing of self-subsisting substances are concrete actualities.

4. God's Eternity

In order to understand how God is present in time, we need to consider how things in general are said to be in space or in time.

In the case of presence in space, we must not assume that the only thing literally present in places are bodily substances with their passive dimensive way of being present in space, identified by their surfaces as where they are available to be acted upon by other bodies in contact with them. For we need to recognize that things with an active presence in space, such as physical light and fields, that is, with some mode of presence in virtue of which they are available to act in space, are just as literally present in space as bodies and are not just present in a secondary sense. God is present in every place in this latter way. Because God has no body or anything else by means of which he can be acted upon, and is not limited in where he acts, he is in no way localized.

In the case of time, the problem is different. The basic mode of occurrence of temporal expressions is adverbial, that is, occurring as operators modifying propositions or predicates analogously to the way in which modal "of" expressions occur, or relating them in a comparable way to that in which subordinative conjunctions such as "if" and "because" relate them.²³ Or, to express the same point less accurately: logically the primary occupants of time are states and situations, events and acts, processes and activities, all things of a kind which we can only identify through propositions, that is, in the way in which they might be reported in clauses or sentential units of speech. Accordingly, if we are speaking of the logical

aspect of the relation of substances to time, we can say that the only sense in which any substance (*subsistentia*, that is, first substance in the logicians' sense picked out by Aristotle in the *Categories*), whether sub-human, human or divine, is in time, is that it is the immediate subject of acts, activities or states in time, a participant in temporal goings on or situations.

Accordingly, so far as one's concern is with what interests the logician *qua* logician, one can say that God as agent immediate to his own act of giving and maintaining existence is just as properly described in time as created agents are so described. In this way, God, now existent and active, and existent and active at past times, is just as properly the subject of temporal predications as creatures.²⁴

In sum, whereas bodily things are located according to where they can be physically acted upon, non-bodily substances are present at places and times according to when and where they act. It is only in this sense that God is now and here, and is at every time and place, and that in giving being he acts now and here and at every time and place.

Some of the most common criticisms of Boethius' and Aquinas's account of eternity are straightforwardly invalid. For instance it has often been argued that for God to have complete and perfect possession of his whole life *totum simul* (commonly translated "all at once") would involve a contradiction if he exists wholly now and yet also existed wholly at other historical times. But this is to ignore Aquinas's understanding that the "now" of eternity is not the "now" which divides the past from the future, dividing the time which measures continuous movement as a point divides a line. For God to exist at a time is for him to act at that time, being internal to his action as any agent is internal to his action. And so for God to exist at any time is not for him to have a localized existence in time but for him to be the unmediated cause of being to things at that time. Accordingly, it would be better to understand *totum simul* as meaning all in one act, since it does not mean all at one time if by one time we mean one instant or period within created time, whether within the time over which continuous change in bodily creatures takes place or within the time (*aevum*) within which the acts of immaterial spirits are ordered.

In order to explain how God can have foreknowledge, the analogy is often used of the way when we look out we can see what is to the left and to the right and what is above and what is below, spread out before us, seeing it all in one act. But here what is pertinent is our, *in one act*, seeing things spread out in three dimensions, that is, at different places, which are all supposedly contemporaneous with one another. Nothing depends on any contemporaneity between our act of seeing and the things seen. Likewise, if we were to imagine God seeing or knowing in some manner things past, things present and things future as if all spread out before him, nothing in the analogy compels us to suppose that his act of seeing has any place in the time sequence of the things past, present and future that he knows, or that these should be contemporaneous with each other (I note that the stellar events we see in the heavens are neither contemporaneous with each other nor with our seeing them). This analogy has been very popular since the time of Boethius. However it makes God so external to creation as to empty any temporal meaning from our ever

saying “He exists now,” whether now or at any other time, and therefore equally from our saying that he has, does and will exist at all times, that is, exists everlastingly. By contrast, Aquinas’s explanation of God’s knowledge – in terms of the kind of knowledge an agent has of what he is doing, so that, in his giving existence to things, he knows them all and all their doings as things either directly willed or permitted by him – preserves the literalness of his presence at each time.

In theology we are always liable to transfer the mistakes we make in thinking about created substances – especially in thinking about human beings – to our thinking about God.

In thinking about human action, there is a tendency to decompose it into an act of will (supposedly the cause of bodily movement but itself entirely interior to the mind as a non-physical entity) and an outward bodily movement (the effect of the supposed act of will), along with a causal relation between them. This causal relation is either no real relation at all but just a matter of the regularity and predictability with which the so-called effect is coordinated with the so-called cause, or else arises from some unknown mechanism instituted and maintained by Nature or God (since it is not ascribable to the human mind’s deliberate operations nor to any physical mechanism or force). This does not seem a right view of human action; but the parallel view of God’s action is not even coherent, since God himself would have to maintain and activate the mechanism coordinating his will with its effect.

According to this mistaken view, the primary *locus* of acts of will is the mind. On this view, the paradigm cases of acts of will are choices or decisions conceived of as mental acts.

Contrary to this view, one can say that, in human life, the paradigm realization or act of the power called the will is not in choice, decision or intention as internal events or states of mind, but in intentional action. A decision is only effective if I do not change my mind before putting it into effect, and it is this physical putting of my decision into effect which is the primary *locus* of the will’s act. It makes no difference to the character of the intentional physical act as an act of will whether it is the realization of a previous decision or whether the decision was (as we say) made in the act itself.

Coming now to God’s case, he is present at each moment of our time, his whole life being lived in one act and present at that time. We can say that the primary *locus* of his acts of will in respect of creation is not in his eternal mind but in his action in the world. Thus it is not that his eternal decision to perform a certain action now (for example, to grant healing by miracle to this man now) lies in his past, and that now he has only to put it into effect. Rather, sovereignly free, it is now that he performs the action, now that he grants the healing, now that he heals, moved by the prayers or needs of his creatures; “deciding the act” in the context of his general plan.

It would be *less misleading* to regard the intentional action within our time now as establishing or constituting what his everlasting will had ever been, than to regard his everlasting will as existing coevally – a temporal being continuing alongside the universe in one Time, and as just now being put into effect. His whole

life is present now – there is not some part of it, his past, containing a longstanding decision, which is not present now, but which he now merely remembers and puts into action. In this way, his struggle for souls, and with each soul, is not the acting out of a play written long before, but the working out in bitter and joyful actuality of what the event is to be which history will record.

In thinking about God's will, we are apt to apply one of two imaginative models, one of his establishing the whole future of the world, as people fondly say "in his eternal decree of predestination," at the beginning, and the other of his being a changeable being like ourselves, changeable in will although not capable of being physically acted upon, and only in this way able to act now in response to prayer. Both models, instead of subjectivizing time or representing it as "unreal," make the opposite mistake of "temporalizing" God, involving a Time which embraces both God and the World, the impossibility to which I referred at the beginning of my chapter. In the first model, God is thought of as existing separately from Creation in something referred to as "his Eternity," and then this "Eternity" is imaginatively conceived of as existing alongside, contemporaneously with, the World. In this model, God has decided ("decreed") statically, immutably, from everlasting, what will happen in the temporal creation, so that the actions we think of as free, including those dependent on his grace, have always been fixedly settled, known and certain, and all that remains is for the decisions of God's will (conceived of as interior mental acts within his interior life) to be played out in time. (Whether God's eternity is contemporary, previous, or in no relation at all to natural time, parallel problems will arise, once a realization of his immediacy is lost.) But this model is a false one, exactly parallel to the mistaken Cartesian dualist model of man, involving a false view of God's action and will, as well as of His eternity.

But, since God is unimaginable, unsurprisingly, neither model is appropriate. In the light of our previous discussion, however, it is clear that as the primary time to be assigned to a human being's will or choice to act is the time of the action itself, so the primary time to be assigned to God's decision and action is that of what happens. It is because of this that it is appropriate to pray in regard to the future but not in regard to the present or past. However much it may be that in his past actions God may have foreseen and anticipated our wishes, no amount of later wishing about the past can count as praying.

5. Objections

5(a) Complaint that Aquinas's Discussion is Vitiated by a False Platonism

When a creature is said to be wise or human, Aquinas feels quite free to use Platonic metaphors and express this by saying that it shares or participates in wisdom, humanity or human nature. And likewise creatures are said to participate in being (*esse*), and God is said to cause this being, communicating being to creatures, and this is expressed even in terms of pouring *esse* into creatures (SCG, I, 30), but not at all with the idea of natures as pre-existing containers limiting how

much *esse* can be poured into them. When he uses the metaphor of a container, saying “*Esse* stands in relation to other things, not as a container to what it contains, but as what is contained to a container” (*ST* I, q. 4, a. 1, reply to obj. 3), it is only to convey that “in speaking of the *esse* of a human being, or a horse, or whatever, *esse* itself is considered as something formal and contained, not as that which is capable of being,” that is, to make it clear that he is speaking of *esse* as a predicate, not as the subject of predication (the point we met earlier when he said that *esse* “is participated in by other things, but does not itself participate in anything else”) (*loc. cit.*). The *esse* thus spoken of has no real existence as a Platonic form, no existence (according to what we have explained earlier) beyond that which consists in being a subject of predication (*esse* signifying the composition of subject and predicate).

The serious question is whether there is anything more to Aquinas’s sometimes Platonic ways of speaking than mere metaphor, as to whether his position and argument depends upon such metaphors.

The main place where this might seem to happen is in his way of speaking of the perfections, saying that God is *esse* itself, life itself and wisdom itself (life and wisdom *per essentiam* whereas creatures have *esse*, life and wisdom *per participationem*). This way of thinking seems to be present in arguments to God’s existence in the *QDP* q. 3, a. 5, restated in *ST* I, q. 44, a. 1, and the so-called Fourth Way in both the *SCG* and in the *ST*, and in the third argument for the identity of God’s *esse* and *essentia* in *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4, taking up the main argument of *QDP* q. 7, a. 2.

Aquinas’s thought seems to be that in the case of God, with his *esse*, his life, his wisdom and so forth present in him (in virtue of which predicates such as *ens*, *vivens* or *sapiens* are truly applicable to him), he possesses these perfections most unqualifiedly and unrestrictedly, while the predicates concerned apply to creatures as well as to God because there is some likeness between them and God in virtue of the *esse*, life, wisdom and such like which they possess. This is not an account of how we learn to use these predicates both of God and of creatures, but of that in virtue of which what we say is true. We learn to use these predicates first of all in regard to creatures, and by various arguments or by the teaching of others, are led to apply them to God. God is thus presented as the archetype from the point of view of creation and causation, but it is not from knowledge of God that we get to understand the words concerned. This idea of God as archetype appears in references to him as *esse* itself and wisdom itself and suchlike.²⁵

For us, the weakness of Aquinas’s statements of his argument stems not from its alleged Platonism but from its appearance of uncritical reliance on the Aristotelian principle that only like can cause like, a principle for whose applications we today require some supporting argument. Thus it is only because perfections such as life, personhood, wisdom and love in creatures constitute enrichments of their being in incommensurable respects that we can see some argument that God as the creative cause of the being of creatures in all its aspects must possess these perfections in himself in a more eminent way – what it is for God to be having incommensurable aspects.²⁶

5(b) *Complaint that Aquinas Sometimes Implies that the Answers to the Questions “Does God Exist?” and “What is God?” are the Same*

It is complained that in one passage in *QDV* Aquinas seems to explicitly say that the answers to the questions “Does God exist?” and “What is God?” *an est?* and *quid est?*, are the same – as if that God exists could be what God is, which seems nonsensical, and one passage in the early *De ente et essentia* has been construed as implying this nonsense.

However Aquinas states his general view with unmistakable clarity in *QDP* q. 7, a. 2, where the second objector says,

... these two questions are different: “Is he?” and “What is he?” and we know the answer to the former but not the answer to the latter, ... Therefore, that which in God corresponds to the question “Is he?” is not the same as that which corresponds to the question “What is he?” and *esse* corresponds to the former question and substance or nature to the latter question.

In response, Aquinas reckons that it is adequate merely to make the same distinction that we met in the *ST* and elsewhere between *esse* as meaning the *actus essendi* of a thing and *esse* as signifying the truth of a proposition even in things such as blindness (as stated in his reply to the first objection in the *De potentia* article) which do not have *esse*.

In the roughly contemporaneous *SCG* I, chapters ten to twelve, he makes it clear that the type of knowledge of what God is (*quid est*) which we don’t have is irrelevant to our current propositional knowledge of whether God exists or not, which is the only kind of knowledge of his existence which we can have in this life. And the type of knowledge of what God is, which consists merely in knowing the meaning of the name “God,” is no use for knowing whether or not he exists.²⁷

Thus in chapter ten, para. 4, the third argument of Aquinas’s opponents (to the effect that God’s *esse* is self-evident, known through itself, *per se notum*), is that Aquinas himself holds that God’s *esse* is his *essentia*, so that the reply to the question “What is he?” and to the question “Is he?” is the same, which would imply that the predicate in “God exists” is either identical with the subject or included in its definition. To this, in chapter eleven, para. 5, Aquinas replies that, to those enjoying the beatific vision of God’s essence, God’s *esse* is indeed supremely known through itself, but that this is irrelevant to those who do not have such vision but have to get to know God from his effects.

Further, confronted in chapter twelve with an objector (para. 3) who argues that, since God’s essence is unknowable and yet identical to his *esse*, his *esse* must also be unknowable, he answers (para. 7) that indeed we do not know of what sort the *esse* by which God subsists in himself is, just as we do not know his essence, but that this is not the kind of knowledge of God’s *esse* which is concerned when one is proving God’s existence. The knowledge of God’s *esse* which is there involved is only knowledge of the kind of *esse* which signifies the composition of the intellect (that is, the composition of the proposition).

As to the complaint about the passage from his earlier work *De ente*, it presents no real difficulty. In it, he tells us that

However, every *essentia* or *quidditas* can be understood without this, that something be understood (*intelligere*) about its *esse*. For I can understand what a man or a Phoenix and yet not know whether it has existence *in rerum natura*. Therefore evidently that *esse* is [always] other than the *essentia* or *quidditas*, unless perhaps there is some thing whose *quidditas* is its own *esse*.

Clearly if one doesn't even know whether a thing exists at all, one does not know (*scire*) or understand (*intelligere*) anything at all about its *esse* – whether this be a matter of knowing the truth of the proposition that the thing as named exists or of understanding (*intelligere*) the nature of the thing (such as is in Aristotle's thought) typically enshrined in a definition.²⁸ Therefore the argument in this passage does not depend upon identifying understanding God's *esse* with knowing that he exists but only on saying that the first is impossible without the second.

In *QDV* q. 10, a. 12, Aquinas supports his view that, in God, his *esse* is included in the nature (*ratio*) of his *quidditas*, by quoting Avicenna as saying in regard to God that *an est* and *quid est* are the same. To understand this passage, we need to inquire what Aquinas would have supposed Avicenna to have meant by his remark. One finds that what Avicenna said was that in God *anniya* or *wujud* (two words for existence) and *haqiqa*, or *huwiyya* (two words for essence) are the same. The Latin translations of Avicenna would have provided Aquinas with a rich context for understanding the remark he quotes, none making him attribute to Avicenna the nonsense that *what God is is that he is*. Aquinas's own understanding of the article concerned is made clear when in the very same article he comments on a fourth argument posed in false support of Aquinas's thesis that God's existence is not self-evident – we cannot know the existence of a thing without knowing what it is and in this life we cannot know what God is, so that God's existence cannot be self-evident because it cannot be evident in any way. And his comment (along the same lines as in the *SCG*) is that “to know that a thing exists, it is not necessary to know what it is by definition but only what is meant by the name.”

Notes

- 1 Anthony Kenny repeats this accusation from his *Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), in his painstaking *Aquinas on Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), the work to which all later references to Kenny in this chapter are made, from which I have learnt much, seeking in this chapter to take account and deal with every one of his objections to Aquinas, whether or not at the length and explicitness that this work, showing so much acuity, care and respect, deserves.
- 2 For example, in Robert C. Coburn, “Professor Malcolm on God,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 41 (1963), 155; Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), 128; William Kneale, “Time and Eternity in Theology,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 61 (1961), 87–108; and Martha Kneale, “Eternity and

- Sempiternity” in *Spinoza. A Collection of Critical Essays*, Marjorie Grene, ed., 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 227–40 (1st ed. New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1973). The further argument of J. R. Lucas in *The Future: An Essay on God, Temporality, and Truth* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 212–13, is also open to the extra objection that it compromises God’s freedom in respect of whether to create a temporal creation.
- 3 Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 98, 101.
 - 4 This is the argument of my *The Reality of Time and the Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
 - 5 *ST* I, q. 5, a. 1, reply to obj. 1.
 - 6 The actual argument presented in the so-called Fourth and Fifth Ways in both the *ST* and the *SCG* is of the most perfunctory kind. What is said has two functions only, the one expository in relation to the general structure of his ordered presentation in each of these works as a whole, and the other to record for the readers of Aristotle, the Aristotelian respectability of the way of thinking concerned. With the Fourth Way what is important is to set the background for his explanation of how our capacity to speak about God depends upon creatures being like God in respect of each of the perfections, while the Fifth Way points forward to the role of God, the first cause, as governor of creation directing it according to his providence.
 - 7 He regards *ens* as a present participle, behaving adjectivally, so that when he uses it to mean “a being” he treats this as to be understood as meaning “a be-ing thing,” that is, something which is, so that it will be modified by adverbs, not adjectives, for instance, *maxime ens*, meaning “a most be-ing thing,” that is, something which most is.
 - 8 Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 108–10; cf. 150. In the passage he cites, from *SCG* I, 26, para. 11, when Aquinas speaks of the divine *esse* as without addition, he is speaking of this *esse* as an *actus*, not of *esse* as predicated. He incidentally implies that this *actus* cannot even be truly thought of as having additions, and in this it is both unlike the *actus* of Socrates’ existing, which had his wisdom added to it, and unlike the common predicates animal, man and *ens* which leave further things to be predicated about their subjects. The necessary distinctions appear clearly in the replies to the first and second objections in *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4, along with the subsequent a. 6, reply to obj. 1, & q. 6, a. 3, in the main reply.
 - 9 In Aquinas the word *forma* is itself highly ambiguous because it divides the ground with *species* in serving as his translation of the word *eidos* in Aristotle. Besides meaning the “what it is” as the “what it is for it to be” of a thing (Aquinas’s *quidditas* or *essentia*), *forma* is also his usual word for form as the correlate of matter in bodily things, the principle of their way of functioning and of their unity as things functioning in this way. *Forma* can also be used to refer to that which the intellect abstracts from sensible things which enables it to generalize about them and also to the imprint on the sense organ which is the means of perception.
 - 10 *In Sent.* I, d. 8, q. 5, a. 1.
 - 11 Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 78f, and John Wippel in *Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, N. Kretzmann & E. Stump, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 94.
 - 12 In a parallel way, when speaking of the peculiarities or “properties” which distinguish the Persons of the Trinity, paternity, sonship and spiritedness, he says that these properties and the respective persons are not two realities but only one, for example, the Father and his paternity. These properties as designated by abstract terms, however,

being forms, as it were, of the persons, are as such in the respective persons, and it is only insofar as these abstract terms are used concretely that they can be used of the persons. *ST I*, q. 40, a. 1, main reply.

- 13 I take my account from *In Sent.* 2, 1, 4. The Persons of the Trinity are *supposita* which differ in *ratio*. One might puzzle as to why God's *esse*, active power, life, understanding and love, to mention key attributes, which also differ in *ratio*, should not also constitute different *supposita*. Here the answer would be that it is the same *supposita* or *suppositum* which exercises all these attributes that are spoken of abstractly. In *ST I*, q. 39, a. 3, he distinguishes between using a name adjectivally and using it substantivally, so that when we use a name of God substantivally we use it in the singular, so that whereas Socrates, Plato and Cicero are three men, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not three Gods but one God. Generalizing, considering the general names "existent," "wise," "eternal," "uncreated" and "immense," when we use them adjectivally of God, then we can speak of the persons of God in the plural, as three existents, three wise, three eternal, three uncreated, three immense ... but if we use them substantivally we must say that there is one uncreated, immense and eternal being.
- 14 *In Sent.*, 33, 1, 1, reply to obj. 1.
- 15 A thing or a nature is a *potentia* if it has the aspect of something which might not have been in act.
- 16 The way the ascription of *esse* to accidents is derivative and secondary and the way it depends on our predication of the accident of substances, which alone have *esse* properly and truly, is made particularly clear in *Quodl.* 9, 2, 2 (3); cf. Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 76n.
- 17 Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* II, 7 and 10.
- 18 I say "simple not knowing" because in the case of ignorance there may be some positive motivation in which the lack of knowledge is rooted – a desire to be free of bothering about the matter in question or a desire not to have one's life interfered with by the consequences of accepting some particular proposition – corresponding to forms of incontinence or of vice respectively.
- 19 The same effect is achieved when somebody says something and we give them the reply "It is so" or "That is so." It is not the same as what is achieved by ellipsis as when the questions "Is the world round?" or "Does the word rotate?" receive the replies "It is" and "It does" though these finite uses of these empty verbs also serve the purpose of marking the composition of subject with predicate.
- 20 Kenny finds comparable distinctions made in different terms by Aquinas in the Appendix to his *Aquinas on Being*.
- 21 It is therefore no use inventing the idea of an immaterial space in which two essentially identical angels would occupy different places.
- 22 Indeed, some logicians have tried to develop logics which allowed of the possibility of a domain of quantification being empty, as it would be if one tried to generalize about centaurs. In such logics, the rule that " $(\forall x)(Fx)$ " implies "*Fe*" may have no application, and " $(\forall x)(Fx)$ " does not exclude " $(\forall x)(\sim Fx)$."
- 23 Cf. Peter Geach, *Logic Matters* (Oxford: Blackwell 1972), 311–12, 314–16ff.
- 24 This positive logicians' point made in the text whereby statements about God as essentially tensed (not as in the case of numbers, tensed without temporal connotation) retains its validity independently of how one explains in what sense natural things are essentially in time and temporal, whereas God is not so, a problem of metaphysics.
- 25 For example, in *SCG I*, 23, para. 2, a. 7, and *ST I*, q. 4, a. 1 & a. 2, and q. 9, a. 1.
- 26 Cf. ch. 8, sect. 4 & 5, and ch. 9, sect. 1 of my *The Reality of Time*.

- 27 Thus, in chapter twelve, Aquinas replies to the objection (para. 4) that demonstration must depend on knowing what God is because Aristotle refers to the meaning of the name of a thing as a definition of what it is, by explaining (para. 8) that demonstration proceeds from a name of God which takes its meaning from his effects, not from knowledge of his *essentia*.
- 28 The verb *intelligere* is conveniently ambiguous so as to cover every degree of appreciation or knowledge up to full comprehension (*comprehensio*).

Chapter Two

Thoughts Addressed to an Analytical Thomist

Hilary Putnam

1. Introduction

I cannot claim to be an “Analytical Thomist” for two reasons: first, I am a practicing Jew, and Thomism is a philosophical tradition within the Roman Catholic Church. (Perhaps I could be an “Analytic Maimonidean”?) But not only do I philosophize within a different religious tradition than Thomists do, there is also the fact that my own approach to philosophy is, I think, quite different. My purpose here, however, is not to reject Analytical Thomism, or even to criticize it, but rather to enter into a dialogue with it. Thus even if I do not put the remarks that follow in the form of questions, they are intended in a sense as a set of questions (of the form: “What do you think of this?”) addressed to those who do consider themselves to be Analytical Thomists.

I shall organize these remarks around two topics: the question of “proving the existence of God”; and the question of “predication with respect to God”.

2. “Proving” the Existence of God

“Can one prove the existence of God?” seems to me less a clear question than a tangle of questions which are rarely if ever sorted out and carefully distinguished. To most secular (that is, atheist) philosophers who consider the question at all, it seems clear and the answer seems all too obvious: the traditional (for example, Aquinas’s or Maimonides’s) “proofs of the existence of God” are one and all fallacious, and the very idea of proving the existence of God is absurd. Moreover, the majority of these philosophers take it to be quite clear what a “proof” is: a demonstration that something is the case using the standards (or supposed standards) of, if not science, then, let us say, analytic philosophy. In addition, it is supposed that a sound proof ought to be able to convince any rational person who sees it. (Why the arguments of analytic philosophers themselves – not even the philosophical, as opposed to technical logical, arguments of Frege, or Russell, or Quine, or Davidson or David Lewis – all fail to meet this test is not something that analytical philosophers discuss a great deal.)

Of course I cannot in this short space do what I just called for, that is disentangle and carefully distinguish all the strands of the nest of questions hidden in the

seemingly simple question, “Can one prove the existence of God?” (Perhaps there is no limit to the number of strands that could be distinguished.) Instead I will respond to the familiar secular answer to the question just mentioned (and the construal of the question that it presupposes).

The view that the traditional proofs are fallacious rests, I think, on a straw-man idea of what those proofs are. As readers of this issue of *The Monist* are likely to know, each one of those proofs can be put into a form which is clearly valid (although the premisses, are, of course, nowadays controversial). For example, the causal argument for the existence of God does *not*, as has often been supposed (even by some medievals) presuppose that an infinite temporal regress of causes [a sequence ... A_{-3} , A_{-2} , A_{-1} , A_{-0} , such that for each natural number n , $A_{-(n+1)}$ is the cause of and prior in time to A_{-n}] is a logical impossibility.¹ Of course the arguments have *premisses* that are unacceptable to an atheist; but the idea that they are one and all *invalid*, that they proceed by invalid reasoning from their premisses, is just wrong. Indeed, each of the traditional proofs can be stated in a form in which it proceeds validly from its premisses (ones which an atheist cannot of course accept, but which, I shall argue, are not simply question-begging).

To take the causal proof as an example. It is quite true that there is no logical contradiction in the idea of a universe in which there is an infinite regress of causes backwards in time. However, from the point of view of the philosopher who accepts the causal proof (for example, Aquinas or Maimonides) that entire sequence, and indeed the entire physical universe of which the mereological sum of ... A_{-3} , A_{-2} , A_{-1} , A_{-0} is a proper part, is itself a paradigm case of an utterly contingent being. But (as Immanuel Kant recognized), even if it goes beyond what we have come to call “scientific thinking” to apply this to the universe as a whole, there is something in the human mind itself that makes us want to think that there is a cause for anything whose existence is contingent (and ultimately makes us want to posit an “unconditioned” cause for everything that is “conditioned,” to put it in Kantian language). Properly stated (although I will not do it here),² that intuition can be expressed as a formal premiss from which (with appropriate additional premisses) the existence of a Self-caused Cause can be derived (although the argument I have in mind is far from trivial). Needless to say, the Proof does not yield the existence of a Being with *all* of God’s “attributes”; but it does yield – for one who accepts the premisses! – the existence of a Necessary Being (in the sense of a Being which is its own sufficient ground for existence) of everything that is contingent. Certainly, this is not a “proof” in the (absurd) sense of *an argument which will convince everyone who reads it*, for the very simple reason that the *premisses* will not be accepted universally; it does nevertheless do a certain service – a service, I think, which even the atheist should grant – namely the service of bringing out one *source* of our present idea of God,³ a source which is deep in a very natural conception of reason itself. The fact that one philosopher felt that he had to end a book vigorously defending atheism⁴ with the words, “Still, why is there something rather than nothing?” testifies to the depth of this intellectual urge, or idea, or intuition or whatever you want to call it. If anything, it was the triumph (at least in secular thought), after David Hume⁵ of the idea that there is nothing

problematic about the idea that the universe as a whole should exist wholly contingently, representing an enormous break with what was long taken to be a fundamental principle of human reason as such.

To repeat: in addition to rejecting the idea that the traditional proofs are “invalid,” I reject the idea that they are simply “question-begging.” On the contrary, even if in the end you reject the view of reason which is implicit in the proofs – that is, the view according to which reason itself tells us that contingent existence requires a cause outside itself, and tells us, moreover, that there have to be necessities which are not simply “conceptual” – you ought, I think, to recognize that that view of reason speaks to and expresses intuitions which are very deep in us (and the idea that those intuitions are ones which have been “refuted” by the modern scientific way of thinking is one which deserves critical examination).

What of the other element of the critique of the traditional proofs that I alluded to, namely that they do not produce universal assent (in the way in which, say, proofs in mathematics produce universal assent among those who understand them)? If Analytical Thomists agree with their secular critics that proofs of the existence of God ought to produce universal assent in this way (and I hope they *don't*), then I have to differ with them too, or rather I have to ask the question: “How are we to understand the notion ‘among those who understand them’ in the religious case?”

Two things seem obvious. Firstly, in order to understand talk about God, whether or not that talk takes the form of a “proof,” one must be able to understand the concept “God.” But there are very different possible conceptions of what it is to understand the concept “God,” in a way that has no analogue in the mathematical case. Secondly, even if one understands the concept “God,” to accept any of the traditional proofs one has to find a connection between that concept and the highly theoretical philosophical principles involved in those proofs, such as the ones just mentioned (about conditioned and unconditioned existence, and about what sorts of necessity there can be). Some of the most profound religious thinkers of the last hundred years have had no use at all for this sort of philosophizing; and I would be the last to say that they lacked the concept “God.” What the traditional proofs of the existence of God in fact do is *connect* the concerns of two different salvific enterprises: the enterprise of ancient and medieval philosophy,⁶ which, after all, is the source of the materials for these proofs, and the enterprise of monotheistic religion. While it is certainly possible to have a deeply worthwhile religious attitude which combines these two elements – indeed, the effort to do so has contributed profoundly to Judaism as well as to Christianity and Islam – it is also possible to have a deeply fulfilling religious attitude while keeping far away from metaphysics. Speaking for myself, I would say that while I do conceive of God as a “transcendent Being,” as a “necessary Being,” as an “unconditioned ground for the existence of everything that is contingent,” I feel that insofar as I have any handle on these notions, I have a handle on them as *religious* notions, not as notions which are supported by an independent philosophical *theory*. (Certainly not by the theory of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.) For me the “proofs” show conceptual connections of great depth and significance, but they are not a *foundation* for my religious belief.

(In spite of Maimonides's great prestige, they have never played a very important role in Jewish belief.) Nor are "proofs" the way in which I would try to bring someone else to Judaism, or to religious belief of any kind.

3. Predication with Respect to God

I just remarked that there are many different conceptions of what it is to understand the concept "God." On some conceptions the concept "God" is straightforwardly definable in familiar terms: to be God is to be powerful, knowing, good, and so on, without limit, where the terms "powerful" (that is, able to bring about what one "wills"), "knowing" (that is, having justified true beliefs⁷), and so on, mean in the Divine case just what they do in the human case. But such conceptions have long been challenged by religious thinkers, including, of course, Alfarabi, Avicenna, Maimonides and Aquinas.

On my own view⁸ religious language and the languages of ordinary empirical description and scientific theorizing are, in a way, incommensurable.⁹ The religious believer (*qua* religious believer) is not – or *should not be* – engaged in the prediction of empirical phenomena, and religious faith is not refuted by this or that empirical happening or scientific discovery. To suppose, as many people nowadays do, that "science has refuted religion," is to have a deeply confused understanding of what real religious belief is.

As I emphasized in *Renewing Philosophy* (168ff.), this does not mean that religious belief is immune from criticism (although I am saying that one *sort* of criticism is utterly misguided). One may find what the believer says unintelligible: for instance, one may find that it violates one's sense of what life means; or one may find that religious belief has lost its hold on one (or one has lost one's hold on it), and it now appears as something strange and alien; but what one should not do is claim that one's view, whatever it is, is mandated by "present day science."¹⁰ Nor – or so I argued in *Renewing Philosophy* – should one hope that philosophy of language, or analytic philosophy, will be able to tell one whether religious language makes sense and, if so, what sort of sense it makes. There is simply no uncommitted place to stand with respect to the religious dimension of human life.¹¹

This thought was beautifully expressed to me as long ago as 1960 by Elizabeth Anscombe, when, in the course of a conversation, she compared the difference between the atheist view of religion and the view of the believer to the difference between "seeing the stained glass windows from the outside and seeing them from the inside." But the fact that religious language is in this way incommensurable with ordinary descriptive language does not mean that it is simply a self-enclosed "language game". On the contrary, as Cora Diamond has written, criticizing this very idea,

The questioning expressed in [great religious questions] is *anyone's*; the possibility of such questions belongs to language itself, and not to any particular language game. The tendency to ask them does not depend on any form of life other than speech itself; it is as

much something primitive, something given. ... as responding to other people (and indeed found in small children).¹²

Putting together these remarks – Elizabeth Anscombe’s and Cora Diamond’s – I am inclined to say something like this: that while the *potentiality* for religious language, the possibility of making it one’s own, is a basic human potentiality, the exercise of that potentiality is not a real possibility for every human being at every time. For some human beings it seems never to be a possibility (although something deeply spiritual in them may find another mode of expression). I myself believe that it requires something *experiential* and not merely intellectual to awaken that possibility in a human being. Indeed, if I met a person who had been a diehard atheist, and who one fine day came to believe in God simply on the basis of a metaphysical argument, I do not know what I should think. It could be, of course, that the metaphysical argument was simply the trigger that released something deeper. But what if the belief in God were simply a belief in the strength of a certain philosophical argument? (As David Lewis claims to firmly believe in the existence of real possible but not-actual worlds on the basis of a philosophical argument?) On the supposition that that is all that was going on, I would say that this was not belief in God at all, but a metaphysical illusion.

To say that there is this sort of gap between what the believer means and understands and what the secular critic thinks he means and understands, does not, of course, mean that no fruitful dialogue between a religious thinker and a secular thinker is possible. It may be perfectly appropriate for an atheist philosopher and a religious philosopher to explore together the arguments that each offers. Indeed, it seems to me an important task, not just for religious philosophers but for religious intellectuals generally, and one that John Haldane performs extremely well, to try to show secular philosophers of a so-called “naturalist” bent that their attempted “naturalizations” (that is, reductions) of such notions as “intentionality,” “causality,” “justification,” “truth,” are failures in their own terms. In the same way, it is appropriate for a secular thinker to try to convince a religious thinker that some of his or her views are indefensible in the thinker’s own terms. But that is a very different thing from trying to explain what it means to be religious in a purely intellectual way.

I titled this section “Predication with respect to God,” and what do these remarks have to do with that ancient topic? They have everything to do with it, for the following reason: even if Haldane, or I, or someone else could succeed in convincing someone as intelligent and honest as J. J. C. Smart¹³ that his views on the topics just cited (“intentionality,” “causality,” “justification,” “truth”) do not work, that the world is mysterious in a way that he has tried to deny,¹⁴ still that thinker, as long as belief in God remains something external, as long as he or she sees the stained glass windows from the outside, will feel that the notion “God” is too problematic to represent a possible way out of any intellectual problem – feel, indeed, that it is only dubiously intelligible. There is an enormous gap between anything one could “show” the atheist philosopher by arguments he must accept from his own standpoint (and even the idea that one can do that is tremendously

optimistic, of course), and belief in God. And the atheist's feeling that the concept "God" is problematic is not without good reasons. For once the monotheistic religions passed – irreversibly, I believe – from thinking of God in anthropomorphic terms to thinking of God as a transcendent being, the notion of God did become deeply paradoxical. (Not that it was not paradoxical before!, but that the paradoxical character of the notion became more profound, as most religious thinkers recognized.)

Not all religious thinkers agree that it is paradoxical. A few years ago a distinguished Christian philosopher told me that he thought that the problem of predication with respect to God was the result of a sort of "hang-up" that the medievals had about God's "unity," and that we should simply drop the idea that we have to think of God in that way. I was somewhat surprised, and I recall that I asked him, "Well, do you think that God is literally a mind (or literally has a mind), that is, that He has states of consciousness that succeed one another in time?" (A question I remember encountering in Bertrand Russell's writings somewhere.) My interlocutor replied, "Why not?" I replied that *time*, we now know, is something whose properties are *contingent*; for example, according to General Relativity, whether there is a finite or an infinite amount of future time depends on such things as the average mass-density of the physical universe, and I asked whether putting God in time wouldn't amount to abandoning utterly the idea of God's *transcendence*. He did not reply. Frankly, this conception of God – if it really was my interlocutor's – the conception of God as a being undergoing change in time – seems to me unacceptably anthropomorphic. It certainly would have seemed so to Maimonides or to Thomas Aquinas. But what I want to discuss is not my interlocutor's conception of God as a being in time,¹⁵ but his very interesting remark that the medievals¹⁶ had a "hang-up" about God's unity.

What I want to suggest is that, even if *some* of the reasons these thinkers had for thinking that God must be a Unity may no longer seem compelling, there are good reasons – good *religious* reasons – for at least moving in this direction. The idea of Unity is not simply something that Neoplatonism, as it might be, foisted on the theologies of the monotheistic religions.

Consider, for example, the supposition that God has a faculty of Knowledge and a separate and distinct faculty of Will. On such a view, for God to think that something exists and for Him to desire that it exists are two utterly separate things. Such a separation of the faculties makes perfect sense in the case of finite beings, who may well think (or even know) that something exists although they do not desire it to exist, think (or even know) that something does not exist although they desire it to exist, and so on. But for God to think that something exists *is* for it to exist, and for God to desire that something exists *is* for it to exist. The links, that is, between God's thinking that something exists, His desiring that it exist, and its existing are necessary links.

Of course, what I have given is not a metaphysical proof of Divine Unity, and, indeed, a number of answers have been proposed to this sort of argument. Leibniz, for example, may be read as proposing that God's Intellect is distinguished from His Will precisely by the fact that what his Intellect grasps is the whole realm of

Possibility: what makes a possible thing into a real thing is precisely an act of the Divine Will. The distinction between Possibility and Actuality, is thus, on this account, what points to the difference between Divine Intellect and Will.¹⁷ (But it is certainly not true that *human* will guarantees the existence of what is willed!) Again, some have argued that even Divine Omnipotence does not extend to responsibility for what is brought about by human Free Will, and so God may, after all, desire something which is not actualized (although traditional theology draws back from concluding that the created world as a whole is or can be less good than it might have been).

Thus it is clear that while we can easily explain what it is for will and knowledge to be distinct attributes in the case of human beings (and analogously for knowledge and perception to be distinct, and so on), the explanations are not ones that can simply be carried over to the case of God without modification. What I desire to be the case and what I know to be the case have no necessary connection, but if there is a difference between what God knows to be the case and what He desires to be the case, it is a difference between states which – apart from the cases in which Free Will is involved – are necessarily related, and not just necessarily related but *conceptually* related, since if anything is part of the traditional concept “God” it is Omniscience and Omnipotence. The problem, for one who tries (as the great medieval philosophers tried) to *theorize* about God is that the attributes cannot really be thought of as functioning in the case of God as the “analogous” attributes do in the case of creatures we understand, in particular ourselves; and this problem, I claim, is not simply the artifact of some dubious metaphysical doctrine. The danger that faces one who tries to give up the notion that God’s attributes are in some way One (or at least that each necessarily implicates all of the others) is that one begins to threaten the idea of God’s Transcendence, and that idea is a *religious* and not merely a metaphysical idea. Moreover, abandoning the idea of God’s Transcendence also threatens another religious idea, the idea of God’s Necessity; for to the extent that we make God “intelligible” by giving in to the temptation to think of him as having a lot of separate “states” with functional relations (or as a lot of separate “experiences,” as in William James’s explicitly anti-transcendental theology in *A Pluralistic Universe*), then he begins to seem like – as Haeckel notoriously charged – a “gaseous vertebrate”; and a vertebrate, however immaterial, isn’t the sort of thing that can exist necessarily, on any conception of necessity.

We are then – or at least I am, and I assume “Analytical Thomists” are as well – stuck with a paradoxical conception of God. I shall close with a word about how one might think about the consequences of that fact (consequences beyond the remark that the notion of proving the existence of God to an atheist seems problematic).

I have discussed Maimonides’s (and, briefly, Aquinas’s) solutions to the problem of ascribing “attributes” to God elsewhere,¹⁸ and I won’t repeat that discussion here. But I will say this much: neither Maimonides’s solution (his so-called “negative theology”) nor Aquinas’s solution (*via* the notion of *analogia*) seem to clearly resolve the problem. The problem with negative theology is that it leaves it unintelligible why we should say the things we do about God. What the doctrine of

analogia comes to is itself a question on which interpreters of Aquinas disagree; but one problem I find with it is that it isn't clear that it really is a different solution from another of Maimonides's solutions (namely, that we are "permitted" to predicate "attributes of action" to the Deity;¹⁹ a solution which seems²⁰ like a failure to carry through his negative theology to the end). For example, discussing the application to God of such terms as "being" and "good" and "wise", after having said that these terms are neither applied univocally nor equivocally, but analogically, Thomas writes:

It should be said therefore that names of this kind are said of God and creatures according to analogy, that is, proportion. This occurs in two ways in naming: either many things have a proportion to one, as "healthy" is said of medicine and urine insofar as each is ordered to the health of the animal, of which the latter is the sign and the former is the cause; or one is proportioned to another, as "healthy" is said of medicine and animal, insofar as the medicine is the cause of the health that is in the animal. And in this way some things are said analogically, and not purely equivocally or univocally, of God and creatures. We can only name God from creatures as was said before. Thus, whatever is said of God and creatures is said insofar as there is a certain order of creature to God as to its principle and cause in which pre-exist in an excellent manner of all the perfections in things.²¹

The analogy between medicine and health in the animal that Aquinas employs seems to mean that when we call God "good" or "wise" or a "being" we so refer to him not because he is good or wise or a being in the sense that a creature is, but because God is the "principle" or ground of (what we call) goodness and wisdom and being in creatures. And this is exactly Maimonides' account of the attributes of action!

On the other hand, if (following a different interpretation) *analogia* is understood by taking *literally* the notion of "proportion," that is by employing such a formula as:

- (1) God's Knowledge is that F which is to God exactly as Socrates' knowledge is to Socrates

– then the explanation seems to be wholly inadequate. There is no clear sense of "A is to B as C is to D" that I am aware of which will justify supposing that such a formula as (1) has a unique solution. Just to consider the right hand of the formula, *is there* a single way in which Socrates' knowledge *is to* Socrates? Surely God's knowledge isn't to God in *every* way just as Socrates' knowledge is to Socrates! My own view is certainly not Aquinas's, but it does seem in keeping with something at least suggested by the following words:

... some words are used neither univocally nor purely equivocally of creatures, but analogically, for we cannot speak of God at all except in the language we use of creatures. ... this way of using words lies somewhere between pure equivocation and simple univocity [*Et iste modus communitatis medius est inter puram aequivocationem et simplicem univocationem*], for the words are used neither in the same sense, as with univocal usage, nor in totally different senses, as with equivocation.²²

To put the thought in my own words, it is possible for us to think about God and to talk about God, but doing so essentially involves uses of language which are *sui generis* (*medius inter puram aequivocationem et simplicem univocationem*).

Obviously there are deep philosophical problems (as well as confusions) in this area. I will only mention two:

Firstly, we have a tendency to believe (and philosophers are professionally inclined to believe) that such notions as “univocal” language and “literal” language are themselves clear and unproblematic. I would argue that, on the contrary, “literal” and “univocal” are themselves context-dependent notions, and that there is no one form of discourse which is in some absolute sense “literal.”²³

Secondly, and perhaps this rests on the foregoing tendency, philosophers have a professional tendency to believe that even if “non-literal” forms of language are useful and even indispensable for certain purposes, it must be possible to give a “theory” of these non-literal forms, where the notion of “theory” involves two further assumptions:

- (1) That “theory” means “scientific theory;”²⁴ and
- (2) That scientific theories can, of course, be stated in literal language.

In my view, if there is one thing that there isn’t going to be a scientific theory of (either in the Aristotelian or in the contemporary sense of “scientific theory”), it is how religious language works and how it connects us to God.

But how does this speak to the problem of predication with respect to God? In this way: we can agree that when we call God Wise, or Good or All-Powerful, we are using these terms in a special way (I would not say “non-literal,” because, as I have already remarked I don’t think there is a single way of using them which is the “literal” way. And while God’s Goodness and Knowledge are inconceivably different from human goodness and knowledge, I would not say that the difference either is or isn’t a difference in the “meaning” of the words). And I would say that I cannot explain how that way works except in religious terms, by showing how the use of those terms figures in my religious life, showing how projecting those terms from my non-religious to my religious life is an essential part of that life. And neither can I explain what I mean by “God,” except by showing how my use of the term figures in my religious life – and that is not something I can do at just any time or to any person. Of course, this disbars me from claiming that I can “prove” that God exists to an atheist. But I have already indicated that that is not a claim that I think a religious person should make.

4. Concluding Remark

I said at the outset that the present remarks are intended as a set of questions (of the form: “What do you think of this?”) addressed to those who do consider themselves to be Analytical Thomists. It is time to stop, and hope that eventually they will respond. I am sure I will learn from the responses.

Notes

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My thanks to Ruth Anna Putnam for constructive and extremely helpful criticism of an earlier draft.

- 1 For a reconstruction of the argument which is compatible with the existence of such causal sequences see Robert K. Meyer, "God Exists!," *Nous* 21 (Sept. 1987), 345–61. The idea of the proof – particularly the use of Zorn's Lemma – was, as Meyer points out, suggested by myself.
- 2 See paper cited in previous note.
- 3 Of course, our present idea of God has itself developed in the course of time, partly under the influence of philosophy itself; but it is none the worse for that.
- 4 W. Matson, *The Existence of God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967).
- 5 Even Hume contents himself with saying that it is useless to speculate about a cause for experience as a whole.
- 6 For the reasons for seeing "philosophic antique" (ancient and medieval philosophy) as a group of salvific enterprises, see Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
- 7 NB. God does not have Gettier problems!
- 8 Cf. chs. 7 and 8 in my *Renewing Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).
- 9 My use of the word "incommensurable" here is not meant to be an invocation of Kuhn's or any other "theory" of science or of language; the problem of understanding the phenomenon I refer to is the problem of understanding religious discourse itself, and that is not something one achieves by *theorizing* about language. See *Renewing Philosophy*, 148–53.
- 10 Cf. my "God and the Philosophers," forthcoming in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*.
- 11 This paragraph and the one that precedes it are adapted from my "Negative Theology," forthcoming in *Faith and Philosophy*.
- 12 Cora Diamond, "Riddles and Anselm's Riddle," reprinted in her *The Realistic Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 287–88.
- 13 I use Smart and Haldane as examples not only because they are philosophers I admire, but also because I so much admire their way of engaging one another in *Atheism and Theism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
- 14 The way in which the world is mysterious is not a way that has to do with the idea, which I would not employ, of "limits to natural science." Saying that the world is mysterious isn't saying that there is this or that thing that natural science could attempt to explain that it cannot explain; it is, among other things, saying that not all questions are scientific questions.
- 15 To be fair, my interlocutor didn't actually put forward the conception of God as a being with changing states of consciousness, but he did ask why *shouldn't* we accept it.
- 16 One can cite representative thinkers from all three of the Jerusalem-based monotheistic religions as upholders of a strong doctrine of God's Unity: for example, Alfarabi and Avicenna from Islam, Maimonides from Judaism, and Aquinas from Christianity.
- 17 This reading of Leibniz was suggested to me by Abraham Stone.
- 18 In "Negative Theology."
- 19 *Guide for the Perplexed*, I, 52.

- 20 I say “seems” because I am convinced that Maimonides was aware of the difficulty and thought that he could meet it, perhaps by an element of mysticism.
- 21 *ST*, I, q. 13.
- 22 *ST*, I, q. 13, a. 5, *responsio*.
- 23 For a view of language which supports this claim, see Charles Travis’s important book, *The Uses of Sense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- 24 A version of this assumption is in play in medieval philosophy as well, I would claim, although the paradigm of “science” was, of course, different.

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Chapter Three

Three Theological Appropriations of Analytic-Philosophical Readings of Thomas Aquinas

Nicholas M. Healy

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to consider some examples of how analytically informed readings of Aquinas's theology and philosophy have been used in contemporary doctrinal and moral theology. The examples are drawn from the work of three theologians: George A. Lindbeck, Bruce D. Marshall and Stanley M. Hauerwas. There are, of course, a number of other theologians whose work would be well worth examining from a similar perspective.¹ But although these three are by no means representative of all the various constructive uses of an analytic reading of Aquinas, they do seem to be especially interesting, both because they have been particularly influential and because they illustrate in different ways certain significant moves and possible areas of concern within contemporary theology. It is not incidental that all three theologians have their PhDs from Yale University.² From about the late 1960s through the early 1990s, the Yale Religious Studies Department was arguably virtually unique in North America in having among its members orthodox Christian theologians who were not only keenly interested in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy, rather than in some form of continental philosophy, but were at the same time attempting to retrieve elements of pre-modern theology, like Aquinas's thought, as a more fruitful line of approach than the "liberal" theology developed in response to Kant and later moderns.

None of the three, again not incidentally, is a Roman Catholic, still less a Thomist in anything like a traditional sense. In this, they exemplify the ecumenical thrust of the recent renewal of theological interest in Aquinas's work. As Protestant theologians, they display a somewhat different emphasis compared with those Roman Catholic theologians who take a special interest in Aquinas's theology. The latter, to over-generalize, are usually primarily concerned to develop the correct interpretation of Aquinas's work. The former's primary concern, on the other hand, is to draw from Aquinas some insight, approach, concept or principle that can be appropriated for use in contemporary constructive theology. Accordingly the focus here will not be on the details of how Lindbeck, Marshall and Hauerwas read

Aquinas; nor will I attempt to assess the reasonableness of their interpretations. Rather, the aim is to give some idea of how they use what they learn from him as they develop their own proposals.³

2. George A. Lindbeck

Perhaps the most significant and extensive theoretical appropriation of a combination of analytic philosophy and Aquinas's thought for constructive theology is that of George Lindbeck. In his major work, *The Nature of Doctrine* (ND),⁴ Lindbeck described a new way of thinking about theology and the church that, twenty-odd years later, is still influential.⁵ Lindbeck's proposal is thoroughly informed by both Aquinas and by contemporary analytic philosophy, principally the work of Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin and Gilbert Ryle, by the ethnographer, Clifford Geertz and by the Yale philosophers of religion, William Christian, Sr. and Paul Holmer, among others. Lindbeck developed and wrote the book at Yale, where Karl Barth's critique of liberal theology had taken root, particularly in the work of Hans Frei and David Kelsey. Lindbeck does not consider himself a Barthian but he readily acknowledges the influence of Frei, including Frei's work on Barth.

The references to Aquinas in ND are not especially frequent, but since it is an exercise in constructive theology rather than a reading of Aquinas this is to be expected. (There are about the same number of references to Wittgenstein.) After Lindbeck's proposal was attacked in a set of articles in *The Thomist* of 1985 for its putatively fideistic and inadequate concept of truth,⁶ Bruce Marshall, a former student of Lindbeck, wrote a lengthy defense in the same journal. In his brief "Response to Bruce Marshall" that followed Marshall's article, Lindbeck notes that Marshall "makes me understand both myself and Aquinas better than I had done before." Lindbeck then adds, with customary modesty, that ND

is in part a clumsy rendition in modern philosophical and sociological idiom of what Aquinas said more fully and more precisely long ago. I mean this quite literally ... my utilization of the contemporary developments has been heavily influenced by the reading and teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas that I have done since my undergraduate days four decades ago. Aquinas was a constant, even if background, presence while I wrote *Nature of Doctrine*.⁷

Marshall's piece was entitled, "Aquinas as a Postliberal Theologian." Marshall's defensive strategy is to contend that "if Lindbeck is a fideist or irrationalist on truth, so is Aquinas, with whom such labels are not usually associated."⁸ Marshall's argument, accordingly, turns in part upon his ability to show the coherence between Lindbeck's proposal and Aquinas's understanding of doctrine. I therefore draw upon Marshall's piece here.

Lindbeck's ND had two rather different aims. The first was to propose a theory of doctrine that would facilitate ecumenical discussion. Lindbeck was a key member

of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic dialogue group for many years and had been an observer for the Lutheran World Federation at Vatican II. It seemed to him that attempting to gain consensus among dialogue partners on the exact wording of doctrinal proposals was somewhat beside the point. Is there a theoretical way of showing that “uniformity of doctrine” is not necessarily “the sign of ecumenical success”?⁹ In other words, is there a way of understanding doctrine that permits difference, even seeming (though not real) conflict, among doctrines held by various parts of the church, yet also permits the justified assertion of genuine doctrinal reconciliation among those parts? If such a way could be found, it would also account for development and modification of doctrines over time without threatening the integrity of the church’s historical identity.

While the theory of doctrine for ecumenical purposes was his main concern, Lindbeck saw that he must develop a theory of religion to support his account of the way doctrines work. As he later noted somewhat ruefully, this aspect of the book caught more attention from its readership as the original context – ecumenical dialogue – became less commonly of interest.¹⁰ Both concerns issue in the proposal for “post-liberalism” and here I will generally conflate the two.

For the most part, Lindbeck makes his proposal in a “non-theological” way, without recourse, that is, to the doctrines themselves or to Scripture so as to present an “ecumenically and religiously neutral” theory of doctrine.¹¹ Yet he also rules out a foundational use of non-theological concepts drawn from philosophy and social science. What is non-theological cannot be the basis and norm for subsequent theological assertions. Any use of philosophy, including analytic philosophy, is to be *ad hoc* and unsystematic within theology. It can be used only to express the argument clearly, not to ground it. The theory of doctrine, then, is presented as descriptively better than its rivals, rather than as normative or explanatory. In this Lindbeck believes he follows the practice of the pre-modern theologians, particularly Aquinas’s use of Aristotle.¹²

Lindbeck’s argument is made in terms of a threefold typology of models of religion and doctrine. The third, post-liberal model, is proposed as the most satisfactory in that it can encompass the other two, even though they conflict with one another. According to the first model, religion is fundamentally a system of beliefs, so doctrines are “cognitive-propositional” in nature; they are “informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities.”¹³ They function much the same way as the statements of a chemistry textbook, which are meant to inform readers as precisely as possible about what is known about chemical compounds, except that doctrines tell us about theological realities. To claim that a doctrine is true is therefore to say that what it proposes corresponds to the objective reality to which it refers, to what is the case about God and about created reality.

The cognitive-propositional view of doctrine was common in pre-modern times, especially in Protestant Orthodoxy and Counter-Reformation scholasticism, when arguments about statements of belief were, of course, very much at issue. Interestingly, though, Lindbeck believes that some twentieth-century thinkers, such as the analytic Thomist, Peter Geach, and the popular theologian, C. S. Lewis, also share the view that doctrines are primarily “truth claims about objective realities.”¹⁴

The difficulty for ecumenical dialogue with this view of doctrine is obvious. Two conflicting statements about a theological reality cannot both be right, at best, only one is correct. Successful dialogue, in such a case, would be contingent upon one party's willingness to reject at least some part of their original doctrine and adopt a new one.

The dominant alternative is the "experiential-expressivist" model. This understanding of religion and doctrine arose in response to Kant's critique of religious truth claims and the subsequent turn to the subject in theology. Its foremost early exponent was Schleiermacher, whose approach has been replicated in various forms by "liberal" and "mediating" theologies. Within this model, doctrines are not truth claims about objective realities but are linguistic expressions of a fundamental religious experience that is more primordial than speech. Schleiermacher calls this experience "the feeling of absolute dependence," Rudolf Otto, the sense of "the holy" and Bernard Lonergan, "being radically in love without an object." Doctrines attempt to capture this experience in linguistic form, often with a view of evoking in others an awareness of their own such experiences. The pre-thematic experience being described is taken to be universal, though it does not come to consciousness in everyone.¹⁵

The benefits of this model for ecumenical dialogue and, indeed, for interfaith discussions, are clear. Two conflicting doctrinal statements may *seem* to conflict according to their letter, but because they are symbolic of something deeper and pre-linguistic, they may actually express different facets of that one experience. Conflicting doctrines may therefore be said to complement one another. The drawback for orthodox Christianity is that it becomes relatively easy to undermine the force of traditional beliefs. If a doctrine is a secondary and derivative linguistic expression of a universal but finally private religious experience, it is the latter which is *really* what religion is all about and where the truth of a religion lies. Ecumenical dialogue then may seem more or less unnecessary, for the particular truth claims of the various religions are relativized by shared belief in a universal religious experience.

Lindbeck notes that experiential-expressivism appears to fall foul of Wittgenstein's argument against private language, for it asserts that the basic religious experience is "independent of any language game."¹⁶ Moreover, if Peter Geach is right about Aquinas, then Aquinas would agree with Wittgenstein on the impossibility of pre-linguistic experience.¹⁷ This would suggest, against transcendental Thomists such as Lonergan and Rahner (both of whom, in Lindbeck's view, are experiential-expressivists), that to the extent their theory relies upon transcendental, pre-linguistic experience, their transcendentalism conflicts with their Thomism. He notes, too, that in this model it is difficult to see how Scripture has any authority over the expressions of the experience. The criterion of doctrinal adequacy and of the adequacy of one's interpretation of Scripture can ultimately only be the experience itself. It then devolves to the magisterium (for Catholics like Rahner and Lonergan) to control the "expressions" by doctrinal definitions and Scripture is reduced to a supporting role.¹⁸ This conflicts with Aquinas, for whom Scripture is the ultimate authority.¹⁹

Lindbeck next applies Occam's razor to argue that an appeal to private experience is unnecessary and unwarranted. Medieval Aristotelians, Aquinas among them, distinguished between first and second intentions. When I attend to an object (*intentio objectiva*), say, an animal, I first consider it in so far as it is this particular animal, this dog, Fido. At a second stage, I may reflectively attend to "animal" insofar as it is a concept applicable to many objects and species. Likewise with regard to mental activities (*intentio formalis*), in which "the first intention is the act by which we grasp objects, while the second intention is the reflex act of grasping or reflecting on first formal intentions."²⁰ The point is that the evident fact that our second intentions are clearly linguistic gives us no grounds for thinking that our unreflective first intentions are pre-linguistic. They are as linguistically formed as our second intentions, even when we do not use language in attending to them. For both Aquinas and Lindbeck, "affective experiences (in which would be included a sense of the holy or of absolute dependence) always depend on prior cognition of objects, and the objects available to us in this life are all in some fashion constructed out of (or, in medieval terminology, 'abstracted from') conceptually or linguistically structured sense experience."²¹

Lindbeck admits, however, that since he cannot *prove* the universalist claims of the experiential-expressivist position to be incorrect, he must develop a model that can better describe religions and the way doctrines work within them. This is his "cultural-linguistic" model of religion and his "regulative" theory of doctrine. Lindbeck borrows from the work of Clifford Geertz and others to draw out the analogies between religions and cultures. He defines religions as "comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world."²² They function as a "framework or medium" for our experience, and thus as a kind of Kantian *a priori*, but one in which the order of experience and language is reversed. For it is the beliefs and practices of the community that are fundamental and it is they which give rise to our inner experiences rather than vice versa. On this view, one's inculturation into a particular community is likely to elicit particular kinds of religious experiences.

Doctrines function in cultural-linguistic religious systems as "communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude and action."²³ They govern religious discourse and other activities in much the same way as grammar rules govern good linguistic usage. Grammar rules do not say anything about reality. Instead they specify how words should be used in order that, among other things, sentences may say something about reality. Likewise doctrines, according to Lindbeck, are not, as such, propositions about reality, they are second order forms of discourse. Unlike most grammatical rules, however, the same sentences which are used to state doctrines may also be used to make first order propositions. When they are so used, they are no longer used doctrinally, that is, as "a norm of communal belief or practice."²⁴ Thus to take one of Lindbeck's own examples, when the sentence, "Christ is Lord" is used as a doctrinal statement it asserts only that (a) such a claim is consistent with the doctrinal tradition based upon and governed by Scripture, and (b) this conviction should so inform all Christian action that it is consistent with the

doctrine. One might challenge the claim for coherence, perhaps by saying that the very notion of lordship cannot be consistent with Christianity because it is inherently oppressive. A counterargument might then discuss the meaning of lordship as applied to Christ in Scripture. And, of course, one can use “Christ is Lord” non-doctrinally as a first order sentence. It can be used to make a truth claim, for example, when Christians witness to Christ, or to acknowledge Christ’s Lordship in prayer and praise.

The matter is made more complex because Lindbeck’s understanding of truth is similar to Aquinas’s. Truth is the correspondence of the mind with reality and so is located in the person rather than directly in the sentence. The truth of a sentence *as spoken*, then, is not completely determined by the words of the sentence and their relation to reality. The meaning of a sentence, and thus its truthfulness, is governed by its use, and good use is determined by the rules of the community. In all linguistic communities it takes time to acquire the skills needed to use language well. Within a religion, viewed as a cultural-linguistic system, acquiring skill also involves being formed by repeated performance of social practices. It follows, according to Lindbeck, that it is the whole person who corresponds truthfully with reality not merely the mind: the “mental isomorphism of the knower and the known can be pictured as part and parcel of a wider conformity of the self to God.”²⁵ Those who are “experts” in Christianity – the saints – tend to speak and act in Christian ways unreflectively; they have what Aquinas calls connatural knowledge (citing *ST* II-II, q. 45 a. 2; I, a. 6 ad 3). When they speak, they do so truly because they are in themselves in accord with Christian doctrine and practice and thus they correspond with the reality of which they speak.

It follows that the sentence “Christ is Lord,” when properly used, may state a doctrine or make a claim about the way things are, and when used badly, may make what amounts to a false claim. I may render my words untrue by actions that indicate that my mind is not in accord with the reality of which I speak. This may be due to sin or to my lack of skill in my cultural-linguistic system. The crusader who shouts “*Christus dominus est*” as he cuts off his enemy’s head is unlikely to be a well-formed Christian. However well-intentioned, his actions are (one might argue) inconsistent with the grammar of Christian life and indicate that he does not really understand what he is saying. This does not mean, of course, that the actual words he speaks, if expressed by a saintly person acting differently, would not be true. And further, Lindbeck is clear that the crusader does indeed say what is ontologically true, irrespective of his performance.²⁶ His point is that the truth claim of the crusader’s first order statement, as such, is falsified by his action. The meaning of the sentence is changed by its being said as part of an action that is inconsistent with Christian doctrines. For a religious truth claim to be justified it must cohere with the web of Christian beliefs and communally sanctioned practices, which obviously this sentence, as such, can do and usually does. But when a first order claim is made in the concrete its truth depends upon an assessment of the speaker’s whole performance and *its* coherence with the web of Christian beliefs and practices. If the performance does not meet that criterion, as is the case with the crusader, it indicates that the subjective condition for truthful

utterance of first order claims, namely correspondence of the mind with reality, does not obtain. As Lindbeck states, “[a] religious utterance ... acquires the propositional truth of ontological correspondence only insofar as it is a performance, an act or deed, which helps create that correspondence.”²⁷

The matter, however, is complicated further because it is a question here of theological truth and thus of a correspondence of the self with divine reality. With Aquinas,²⁸ Lindbeck believes that we cannot know God in this life. We know God only through what is not God, by means of the effects of which God is the “cause.” Our language, based as it is on created realities, cannot reach the divine reality of which we must try to speak as we witness to Jesus Christ. So how is performative correspondence possible? Lindbeck here follows Aquinas’s use of a medieval grammatical distinction. When we say “God is good,” we do not know what “good” means, what it is in God that is signified by the word “good” (the *significatum*). Our human use of these words – our mode of signifying (*modus significandi*) – remains limited to their creaturely applications. Yet Aquinas contends that the *significatum* of such sentences does truly correspond to the divine reality. Indeed, certain names, such as “being,” “good” and “true” and similar perfections are “more properly” and literally applied to God than to anything created, even though, to repeat, we in this life do not know *how* they apply.²⁹

Because we can reasonably say that “God is truly good in himself,” we are authorized to respond to God “as if God were good in relation to us (*quoad nos*) in the ways indicated by the stories’ of Scripture. Thus the kind of ‘performative-propositional’ correspondence of the self to God is possible, even on this ‘agnostic’ reading of Aquinas.”³⁰

In sum, for us to be able to say something true about God a number of conditions must be met. Firstly we must inhabit a religious culture that has “categorical truth.” That is, it must have available doctrines and practices that are sufficient to form someone so that they can correspond performatively to God in what they say and do. We may not inhabit such a culture, for there is no reason to think there may be more than a few of them or perhaps there is only one. If we are not a member of such a religious culture then it is unlikely that we can say anything true about God. Secondly we need to be trained so that we can use the cultural-linguistic system’s categories well, thereby achieving what Lindbeck calls “intrasystematic truth” as we follow its linguistic and behavioral rules properly and skillfully. If we do not, we may be like the crusader, who inhabited (so Christians believe) a categorically true religion, but failed to live consistently within it.³¹ Both forms of truth, categorical and intrasystematic, are necessary for a Christian to act, think and speak in ways which correspond ontologically to the reality that is God.

The function of doctrines within the Christian cultural-linguistic system is thus not primarily to make propositions about God and about reality as it is related to God. Instead it is to determine the conditions for making such propositions and, more significantly, to specify the criteria to be met by people who seek as Christians to correspond truly to God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Doctrines, like rules, are to be followed. Theological inquiry, according to Lindbeck’s theory, seeks to help Christians in that following. It is not particularly concerned with

interpreting doctrines by restating them in terms that render their ontological claims more intelligible. Theologians, like Christians more generally, are, or should be, more concerned about how to live in accordance with the rule that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, than about how to develop or understand explanations of the doctrine of the Trinity that make it more comprehensible as an ontological description of God. The normativity of doctrines lies, then, most fundamentally in their relation to the Christian life. Thus the grammatical understanding of doctrines focuses theological attention “on the concrete life and language of the community.”³² Thinking of doctrines in terms of this function opens up the possibility of genuine reconciliation between what may seem like conflicting descriptions of reality. For upon further examination, conflicting doctrines may be discovered to be merely conflicting re-descriptions of a more basic and commonly accepted rule, their conflict a consequence only of using conflicting conceptual schemes: say Platonic and Aristotelian. Or they may refer to two complementary aspects of the same concern to follow Jesus Christ within different pastoral contexts as, for example, the Lutheran *sola gratia* doctrine and (according to one interpretation) the Tridentine doctrine of merit.³³

3. Bruce D. Marshall

Bruce Marshall has displayed considerable expertise in both Aquinas studies and analytic philosophy throughout his career, most notably in his recent *Trinity and Truth*, where he develops an extended Christian account of truth.³⁴ Unfortunately, the book is far too complex to be properly treated here. I will consider just a small portion of his early work in order to illustrate one of the possible benefits of a Lindbeckian grammatical approach to doctrine generally and, more specifically, to the Christology of Aquinas.

In his first book, *Christology in Conflict* (CiC) a revised dissertation, Marshall discusses two divergent theological ways of accounting for Jesus Christ as “of ultimate significance for salvation” or, alternatively, as “the absolute savior.”³⁵ The “first way,” that of pre-modern theology, is also taken by Karl Barth, Marshall’s example for analysis. Barth ties “that which is of ultimate significance” to the particular person, Jesus Christ. Marshall draws here upon Aquinas’s distinction between particular and positive descriptions of individuals (ST I, q. 30, a. 4). Positive descriptions identify an individual indefinitely, by characteristics shared with others: for example, “someone who died on a Cross” or “a Nazarene.” Such references are vague. Particular identity descriptions, on the other hand, are definite and precise. They use proper names, demonstratives and other means to formulate a uniquely identifying description: “this man, Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph the carpenter, born at Bethlehem, who preached the Sermon on the Mount,” and so on.³⁶ If Jesus the particular person is of ultimate significance, it follows that we can arrive at an adequate concept of “that which is of ultimate significance” only by learning who Jesus is as *this* person, distinct from any other. Jesus is identified in his particularity in the Gospel narratives of his life, death and Resurrection.³⁷ The

Gospels are therefore “materially decisive” for any description of what is of ultimate significance. It follows that a Christian account of salvation and of “that which is of ultimate significance” must be informed and materially governed by the Gospel accounts of the particular person, Jesus Christ.

Karl Rahner follows what Marshall calls the “second way,” the “mediating” approach taken by many theologians since Schleiermacher. Rahner shares with Barth the basic conviction that “only Jesus Christ as a particular person can be the unique redeemer.”³⁸ But like many moderns, he does not consider the Gospel accounts of Jesus’s identity to be a sufficient basis for making sense of the claim. Instead he seeks a concept of “significant for salvation” that is reasonable *apart* from the Gospel, which he can subsequently apply to Jesus Christ as a special case. According to Marshall’s argument – which is far more complex than my summary suggests – this approach effectively rules out the material decisiveness of the Gospels’ identity descriptions of Jesus as a particular person. Jesus can be “of ultimate significance” only as a positive individual, as the “first instance of a general pattern which we can realize in common with him.”³⁹ So Rahner’s mediating Christology is finally based upon an appeal to “general criteria or patterns.” To that extent, it is inconsistent with his basic Christological conviction.⁴⁰

A number of issues remain, of course, even if we are convinced by the argument that the first way is the better one. One of the most important is how to make a reasonable theological link between the particularity of Jesus of Nazareth and the Word of God incarnate in him. It is here that Aquinas’s approach is arguably superior even to Barth’s. In order to explicate the logic of the Incarnation, Barth turns to what Marshall calls “ontological description,” that is, descriptions that (a) are meant to be true in that they correspond to reality, and (b) use concepts that can be applied to realities other than Jesus Christ.⁴¹ Barth’s ontological description of the Incarnation relies upon the *anhypostatic-enhypostatic* formula, and is extensive and very complex. In fact, Marshall says, it does not clarify the scriptural account of Christ so much as complicate it, making the Incarnation “seem exceptionally arcane.”⁴²

Although Aquinas also engages in ontological description, his main focus, according to Marshall, is elsewhere. Marshall argues that Aquinas’s theological intent is above all to follow the *modus loquendi* of Scripture, to show that the “way Scripture speaks” is reasonable and thereby to “save” the convictions it expresses.⁴³ For Aquinas, the Incarnation is just such a conviction. Scripture “attributes without distinction those things which are God’s to this man, and those things which are this man’s to God.” This indicates that there can be only a single subject for whatever is said about God and about Jesus.⁴⁴ It follows, negatively, that any ontological description that is not consistent with a single subject is incorrect. On that account, Aquinas rules out the descriptions of the Incarnation proposed by Nestorians. More positively, those ontological descriptions of the reality of the Incarnation which are in conformity with scriptural convictions are on that account shown to be true. The truth of an ontological description of the Incarnation is assessed by its conformity to the *modus loquendi* of Scripture. If it does so cohere, it is true in the full sense of corresponding to the reality it describes.⁴⁵

Christology, on this view, is primarily second order grammatical analysis, an account of the rules that govern the way Scripture talks about Jesus Christ. It is, derivatively and secondarily, ontological description, but such first order language is appropriate only to explicate what is discerned by the grammatical analysis. Clearly Marshall here interprets Aquinas's Christology in terms that bring it fairly close to Lindbeck's rule theory of doctrine. One difference, of course, is that Aquinas does not insist that doctrinal analysis is solely second order discourse. He uses first order discourse even as a theologian, albeit, according to Marshall, consequently rather than primarily.⁴⁶

The consequent nature of ontological description in Christology is warranted further by the fact that it describes divine reality. Like Lindbeck, Marshall refers to Aquinas's careful stipulations about how human language may be used with reference to God by means of the distinction between "what a term signifies (the *res significata*) and the way in which it signifies (the *modus significandi*)."⁴⁷ Concepts used in ontological description, such as hypostasis, person, union, and the like, cannot correspond to the divine reality in a way that we can specify. As a consequence, they must be carefully qualified. It is the need for such extensive qualifications, according to Marshall, that renders Barth's descriptions too complex and ultimately less than helpful.

Aquinas's approach, by contrast, is to keep the technical descriptions much closer to the scriptural *modus loquendi* which they serve. This approach suggests the possibility of a different kind of Christology – a "logico-grammatical analysis of the belief [expressed explicitly in Scripture] that 'this man is God'."⁴⁸ Aquinas does this, as is well known, by discussing certain Christological statements in *ST* III, q. 16. "Aquinas's aim in this complex and variegated logico-grammatical analysis, taken as a whole, can be seen as one of specifying and enriching his account of the Christological *modus loquendi* of scripture."⁴⁹ In the first article, he analyzes the expression, "God is a man" and finds it grammatically correct and therefore true. In the second article, he does likewise with "A man is God." Both statements are true because they are consistent with Scripture. He then goes on to consider certain "reduplicative propositions," that is, statements which qualify the subject by means of words like "as," "insofar as" and "according as." The statement, "Christ, as man, is God" is incorrect, because the "as" alters the grammar to suggest that it is because he is human that Christ is God. Another reduplication can make the sentence correct, however. "Christ as *this* man is God" is true because "the demonstrative pronoun 'this' attracts 'man' to the suppositum." That is, the word "man" refers to the single subject, the Son of God incarnate in the particular human, Jesus of Nazareth. It thereby rules out a reference to the human nature he shares with the rest of humanity (*ST* III, q. 16, a. 11, ad 3).

On Marshall's account, then, Aquinas shows the link between the particular person Jesus of Nazareth and God by means of grammatical analysis rather than by ontological description, by attending to the words used to talk about the Incarnate Word rather than by finding ways to describe the divine-human reality. His analysis supports the same doctrinal point Barth seeks to make – that Jesus of Nazareth is God Incarnate precisely and only insofar as he is this particular man. But Aquinas's

analysis is less confusing and more economical. Moreover, in marked contrast to Rahner, Aquinas shows that Jesus is God “explicitly in virtue of that which distinguishes him from us as a human being, rather than that which we hold in common with him.”⁵⁰ For Marshall, then, Aquinas’s approach to Christology remains, in this regard at least, superior to that of two of the most influential theologians of the twentieth century.

4. Stanley M. Hauerwas

Of the three theologians discussed here, Hauerwas is probably the best known. It is often noted that he was awarded the title of “America’s Best Theologian” by *Time Magazine* in 2001. He has many followers and great influence among the next generation of Christian ethicists. His renown is due in part to his sometimes shocking, often strident and almost always interesting assessments of what he considers to be the secularism of modern Western democratic society, particularly in the USA. He is also critical of what he calls the “Constantinian church,” the church of Christendom that, according to John Howard Yoder’s reading of Scripture and church history, has betrayed its proper task to become too comfortable in the world.⁵¹ With such views, one might quite reasonably think that Hauerwas, a Methodist with Mennonite sympathies, would not be sympathetic to the theology of Aquinas. Yet throughout his career he has frequently drawn from Aquinas (usually *via* analytic readings) in the course of developing constructive proposals that have been perhaps the chief cause of a major shift within contemporary theological ethics in the last couple of decades. These proposals may well have more lasting influence than his polemical work.⁵² I will discuss three or four appropriations of Aquinas, reflecting what seem to be the main stages of Hauerwas’s career thus far.⁵³

In a way somewhat similar to Lindbeck, who sought to recast our understanding of doctrine and theological discourse, Hauerwas began his career by proposing an alternative to the usual ways of doing ethics. The proposal is articulated in his 1975 book, *Character and the Christian Life (CCL)*, a revision of his dissertation.⁵⁴ The Protestant ethics of the time was caught up in the debate over situation ethics and contextualism, with Karl Barth and Rudolph Bultmann the magisterial background figures. Hauerwas contends that the then current debate will be unending because it is based upon the assumptions and principles of a Protestant ethical tradition that is fundamentally flawed. Protestant theology, apart, to some extent, from the Calvinist and Wesleyan traditions, has failed to develop an adequate account of the doctrine of sanctification. Instead the emphasis has been on the doctrine of justification, upon God’s saving action by which we are brought into a right relation with God apart from anything we do or have done. We are justified by our faith alone, by grace alone, irrespective of our merits or failings, or indeed, of who we are at all. While Hauerwas fully agrees that all Christian ethics must be informed by this doctrine, he contends that the emphasis upon justification has been at the expense of well-rounded accounts of what happens in the life of the Christian subsequent to justification.

The centrality of the doctrine of justification and the concomitant atrophy of the doctrine of sanctification has led theologians to adopt the notion of “command” as the “central metaphor” for ethics.⁵⁵ With nothing we have done making any difference to our situation before God, the individual Christian is commanded ever anew, as it were, and can only respond in obedience likewise. Lacking an adequate account of sanctification, command ethics cannot address continuity and growth in the Christian life. It is “occasionalist” and the view of the self it presupposes is “passive and atomistic.”⁵⁶ “Decision” is the “locus of ethical behavior” for command ethics.⁵⁷ We think “ethically” when we attempt to decide whether or not a particular course of action is good or bad. So ethicists see their task as making rational decisions about “cases.” They analyze and discuss ethical quandaries in abstraction from any consideration of the particular identity of the agent. To do so, they may adopt various approaches: deontological or consequentialist or contextual. But in every case they focus upon the ethical act from an observer’s perspective.

The theological need, then, is for a way to talk of the sanctification of the Christian, about continuity and growth in the Christian life, which will in turn make possible a more concrete form of theological ethics. One might think that Hauerwas could have adopted the current Roman Catholic account of sanctification. But he does not, in part because most contemporary Roman Catholic ethicists of the time joined with their Protestant colleagues in thinking of ethics as a matter of making decisions about cases; in part, too, because Hauerwas had concerns about their understanding of natural law (his understanding of which I will discuss below).

Rather than turn to the Catholic ethical tradition, Hauerwas turns to two of its chief sources, Aristotle and Aquinas, as constituting the basis for a better alternative to the prevailing Protestant tradition. That basis is secured in their belief that ethics “is not concerned primarily with how the observer determines whether specific actions are good or bad but rather how the agent becomes good or bad through his activity.”⁵⁸ In appropriating Aquinas’s ethics, Hauerwas rejects the traditional neo-Scholastic reading of Aquinas, which emphasized its Stoic aspects and natural law. While Aquinas had indeed incorporated elements of Stoic virtue theory, with its concern for correlating certain actions with certain virtues, it is a mistake to emphasize this, for Aquinas clearly notes that it is not just deeds that are to be discussed, but how a deed is done (citing *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 5). Thus a significant secondary concern of *CCL* is “to restore the balance in Aquinas’s thought.”⁵⁹ In effect, with the help of contemporary analytic philosophers, *CCL* recovers what had been – among Protestant and many Roman Catholic theologians – a generally forgotten aspect of Aquinas’s ethics.⁶⁰

Hauerwas begins by bringing together Aristotle’s account of the virtues with his theory of human action, for keeping them apart, as many interpreters have done, makes the virtues appear to be “abstract duties or ideals externally imposed rather than forms of the creative determination of the will.”⁶¹ Virtues are in a real sense the internal causes of our actions. Actions are “initiated by desire governed by reason through its choice of the means to the end desired.”⁶² Our desires prompt us to act to achieve particular ends. But our desires do not arise with complete

spontaneity; they are partly formed by previous actions, which train and transform our desires over time. Thus by the frequent performance of certain actions we gain certain habits – dispositions to desire and act in particular ways. If good habits, they are virtues, if bad, vices. As we develop our virtues, we acquire a good character, a unified and more or less stable self that enables us to desire to do what is good and thereby to act freely to achieve fulfillment and happiness. Our actions, then, are “caused” by who we are.⁶³ Indeed it is only in this way that we can act freely. For unless our virtues cause our action, what we do must be caused by something external to us, in which case our action would be involuntary.⁶⁴

Hauerwas then adds to this Aquinas’s conception of the will and intentional action. In his account of human action, Aristotle tended to separate desire and reason too much, and thus separated the relation of end and means, too. By developing the concept of the will, or “rational desire,” Aquinas can not only agree with Aristotle that desire is regulated by the reason, he can go further to say that the reason, too, can have a “desire” for a particular end. Thus my will’s inclination towards an object, that is, my intention, includes both the end and the choice of the means (citing *ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 4).

The implications for contemporary theological ethics of a recovery of Aquinas’s understanding of the ethical act are significant. If an ethical action is necessarily an intentional action in this sense, it cannot be adequately described in terms of the action alone, as if an observer’s perspective were normative or even adequate. My intentional action is set within my history, my particular narrative of growth in character as I acquire virtues. My history informs my description of the action, for my character causes my intentional act. My history is informed by my convictions about what are desirable ends and means. My set of convictions may well be different from those of other people, including those who observe my behavior. Thus it is my description of what I am doing, of what I intend in my action, which is normative, for ultimately only I know why I do something. Nor can I be mistaken about my intention. Hauerwas agrees with Elizabeth Anscombe to the effect that agents know what they do simply by doing it, non-inferentially. This does not mean, however, as in some modern ethics, that I develop a motive, as a “ghostly inner event” which then causes my action.⁶⁵ If such a view were adopted, the motive would indeed be an inner event known only to the agent. But Hauerwas rejects the idea of a prior internal event separable from the action as a whole, as he does any notion that there is a more fundamental self (particularly a transcendental, Kantian “I”) that undergirds either my action or my character. Agents simply *are* what they have done; I am my character, and it is my character that causes my intentional actions.

Hauerwas’s proposal for theological ethics is therefore to replace the dominant metaphor of command with that of character, within which notions of command can be retained and properly understood. “Character” he defines, in accord with Aquinas, as “the qualification of man’s self-agency through his beliefs, intentions, and actions, by which a man acquires a moral history befitting his nature as a self-determining being.”⁶⁶ To become sanctified, then, is “to have one’s character formed in a definite kind of way,” namely “by our basic commitments and beliefs

about God.”⁶⁷ Sanctification is the learning of “the language of faith, in the sense of being qualified by it, to become a different kind of person.”⁶⁸ To be sanctified is to acquire a Christian character, an “orientation” that leaves room for some variation in what may be required of each individual depending upon their history, character and situation.⁶⁹

Hauerwas developed his theory of character in *CCL* independently of Christian doctrine. It is a philosophical theory that can apply to any form of ethical action, though it is one that he takes pains to show is in basic agreement with Aquinas’s own philosophy and is at least consonant with his doctrine of sanctification. What makes the difference for Christians is the particular narrative that informs their intentions – the scriptural narrative of Jesus Christ. Thus while his ethics is shown to be reasonable in terms of a general theory of human action and formation, it does not require universal moral principles. No one acts as they do because they have decided on universal grounds that certain actions are right and others are wrong. Hauerwas does not believe there are universal grounds, or none, at least, that can be made to work that way. “Christians are simply those people who engage and do not engage in certain practices because they have found them appropriate or inappropriate to their way of life – that is, they have learned to describe them a certain way.”⁷⁰ Thus ethics cannot be divorced from theology, for it requires an account of reality and of our place within it, and thus an account of who God is and what God does for us in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

In somewhat later books, such as *A Community of Character (CC)* and *The Peaceable Kingdom (PK)*, Hauerwas develops the ethics of character in rather more concrete and social terms.⁷¹ He engages directly and rather more critically with Aquinas in one of the essays of *CC*, entitled “Character, Narrative, and Growth,” which discusses moral development and includes a critique of Kohlberg’s theory. Like Kant, Aristotle and Aquinas correctly believe that the right thing must be done for the right reason and (for Aquinas) with a good will.⁷² Unlike Kant, they believe one’s reason and will have much to do with the kind of person one is, for it is necessary, they both argue, to have a strong enough character that one’s actions are voluntary, that is, caused by a virtue, for otherwise they would not be free actions. How, then, does one develop moral character? They both assume that character is straightforwardly the product of the unity of the virtues. Thus for Aquinas, prudence unites the virtues and, informed by charity, works in each virtue to orient the agent towards their last end, the beatific vision.

Hauerwas argues that Aquinas and Aristotle both misconstrue the relation between virtues and character. This can be seen in their account of the acquisition of virtues, which in this regard is oddly circular. To acquire the virtue of justice, I must act justly enough times for me to acquire a disposition to act justly. But in order to act justly, I must *already* possess the virtue of justice, for without the virtue, my action cannot be just, since actions done without the corresponding habits are not truly human actions.⁷³ More significantly, neither Aristotle’s nor Aquinas’s understanding of development can account for the complexities of ordinary life. Hauerwas draws upon Stuart Hampshire to note how “we often find ourselves involved in ways of life that require that certain virtues go undeveloped

or be essentially transformed.” Balancing the acquisition of virtues is extraordinarily difficult as we try to decide upon priorities *in media res*. Such efforts are an inadequate basis for character.⁷⁴ Nor *pace* Aquinas is our last end sufficient to unite our actions and virtues into a unified character. For as Hauerwas says elsewhere, “the *telos* of the Christian life is not a goal that is clearly known prior to the undertaking of the journey, but rather we learn better the nature of the end by being slowly transformed by the means necessary to pursue it.”⁷⁵

A better account of character development is one that is shaped by a narrative. Who I am, we have seen, is a history; my life is unified as a story or a journey. But who tells the story? And how do I tell whether my story is truly told? I need a “true story” by which I can structure and evaluate my own as it proceeds. The scriptural story, centered on Jesus Christ, is the true narrative within which we are to situate our own history of attempts to follow Christ, including our “blunders” and confusions. We cannot truly see our end at the beginning of our journey. It is only as we go through life, and as we continually attempt to understand our own history within the history of God’s dealings with humanity, that we gradually see more clearly the shape of our existence.⁷⁶ If we understand character development in these terms, the circular nature of moral growth and intentional action is no longer problematic. (It is perhaps worth making the comment that Hauerwas at this stage of his career seemed to rely mostly upon the more philosophical parts of the *ST*. The *tertia pars* and the Commentaries suggest that Aquinas may be much closer to Hauerwas’s Christological grounding of moral development than he seems to think.)

With *CC* and *PK*, Hauerwas began to give more attention to the role of the church in forming Christian character. To discuss the details of his account of the “story-formed church” would take us too far outside our topic. However it is worth examining his understanding of the natural law, which is closely related to his ecclesiology. Hauerwas believes we live in a world that is morally fragmented, “always on the edge of violence, since there are no means to ensure that moral argument in itself can resolve our moral conflicts.”⁷⁷ Natural law ethics, as commonly practiced, responds to this situation by trying to establish moral absolutes that everyone can (or should) agree on. The attempt is bound to fail, however, for besides being in thrall to command and quandary ethics, it is ultimately based upon an untenable moral universalism. It blurs the distinction between church and world and undermines the particularity of the Christian narrative context for Christian ethical thinking.⁷⁸

But Hauerwas does not reject the idea of natural law as such. Instead he uses it to address a question that has interested him throughout his career – how can one demonstrate the reasonableness and, more specifically, the “verifiability” of Christianity?⁷⁹ He rejects apologetic theory. The function of the church is not to mount arguments, but to *display* Christianity and thereby show its reasonableness and truthfulness and, as it may be, render it attractive as a way of life to those who look on from the outside.⁸⁰ This is a dominant theme in his most recent work, especially his Gifford lectures, *With the Grain of the Universe*, where he engages with the ecclesiology of Karl Barth. In a somewhat earlier essay entitled “The Truth

about God,” an essay I will now draw upon, such a theme is developed in direct relation to Aquinas’s understanding of the Decalogue and the natural law.⁸¹

Hauerwas notes that the Decalogue is usually taken to be a “minimum or baseline morality,” a set of precepts that everyone can subscribe to, whether or not they are religious.⁸² Knowledge of its precepts is thought to be available to everyone, for it is an expression of the natural law written on the hearts of all people. However an analysis of Aquinas’s discussion of the Decalogue indicates that he would not quite agree. For Aquinas the Decalogue is indeed an expression of the moral law of created nature and some of its precepts do not need to be revealed to us. The Decalogue, however, *was* revealed, because certain moral precepts could not be known by reason alone, even though they are necessary for us to know if we are to live in “a community or commonwealth of men under God.” (*ST*I-II, q. 100, a. 5). For us to live well in relation to one another in the community that is under the Lordship of God, we must live well in relation to the head of the community. The first three commandments show us how to do this. We learn from them how to worship God correctly: for example, without making graven images, a precept that we could not have known without revelation. The three initial laws are the basis for the remaining seven and so bear upon their interpretation. For only in the light of grace can a people live “naturally” as a community governed by the Lord.

The Decalogue, then, sets out the “politics” of God, the form of God’s dominion. By showing that the natural law is placed within revealed law, Aquinas indicates that nature cannot be known truly apart from grace. As a consequence, he can argue that the Decalogue is in effect an explication of the one commandment that according to Paul sums up all the commandments of the Old Law: “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom. 13:9). Fulfillment of this law of love requires the gift of charity. So, likewise, does fulfillment of the Decalogue as the laws of God’s community.

Hauerwas then takes this a step or two further. The life of Jesus of Nazareth embodied “most pre-eminently” God’s dominion. And the church, which is “the prolongation” of Jesus’ “earthly life,” is that community which has been given charity.⁸³ The church, then, has been chosen to display the politics of God’s community to the world. It will not do so perfectly, and, to be sure, there will be continuities with non-Christian morality. But in living according to God’s dominion, it also reveals God, too, for it displays something of the God who would have us live this way. In sum, Aquinas

rightly assumed that the Decalogue is the law for all people, but he also knew that only those that had been given the gift of the Holy Spirit had the opportunity to live out the interrelation of the commands necessary to be a holy people. The church, then, becomes the politics ... that makes the exhibition of the morality God desires for all people a material reality.⁸⁴

The attractiveness of life in the church to those outside is therefore due to the way it shows what they already know to some extent – the natural law – within a

distinctive politics the structure of which defers expressly and truly to God's dominion. "To be a part of such a politics is to be provided with the means to live the way God created and intended all humans to live. Christians there [in the church] should not be surprised to discover that people who are not Christians find themselves attracted to the church."⁸⁵

5. Conclusion

As these three examples indicate, one of the major benefits of appropriating Aquinas's work *via* an analytic reading is that it helps theologians who are attempting to develop alternatives to what they see to be the subjectivism, individualism and internalism of modern theology. The emphasis upon the social nature of Christianity and the church's role in shaping the Christian individual retrieves a vital aspect of the pre-modern theological tradition, particularly exemplified in Aquinas, that was lost or at least deemphasized with the turn to the subject. In addition Aquinas dwells upon what is distinctive about Christianity: the uniqueness of the Christian community and its way of life found upon the universal and absolute significance of that one particular man, Jesus of Nazareth. The Aquinas-inspired grammatical approaches of Lindbeck and Marshall offer ways to bring contemporary theology into greater and more fruitful contact with both contemporary and medieval philosophy. In these and other ways, Aquinas has helped these three theologians undermine the Kantian and Romantic assumptions found within much recent theology and ethics.

It may be that the emphasis of both Lindbeck and Hauerwas upon the social nature of Christianity has not as yet been sufficiently complemented by a corresponding account of individual Christians insofar as they live within and, for much of their lives, outside the church community. While the church's influence upon the individual has been fairly extensively treated by them and by those whom they have influenced, there has been comparatively less attention paid to questions such as how individual Christians, whether properly or inadequately formed, may effect the church and the other communities to which they belong, either by their active participation or by challenging the ecclesial *status quo*. The turn to ecclesiology of all three theologians raises the issue of authority and dissent perhaps more acutely for many Christians than it seems to for them, none of whom, as I noted, is a Roman Catholic. They follow Aquinas in according normative status to Scripture and, derivatively, to the community. But a Roman Catholic may need somewhat more complex treatment than Lindbeck offers with his account of communally sanctioned doctrines, even when these are understood grammatically, or Hauerwas provides with his examples of congregational conversation over matters of ethics.⁸⁶ To take one issue alone, Christian doctrines in some churches include – or are understood to include by those in authority – the rule that the church leadership *can* and indeed should adjudicate an action abstractly, independently of the agent. In Lindbeck's and Hauerwas's theoretical work to date, there is little or no discussion of the need at times for individual members of the

community, both those particularly well-trained in the virtues of Christianity as well as those not so well trained, to reject this or some other authoritative doctrine or precept. Christians do so all the time, yet is this always because they lack skill or virtue or are sinful?⁸⁷

Those who find Lindbeck's or Hauerwas's work congenial may well find it useful to follow Marshall in giving further attention to Aquinas's theology, for it may offer ways to expand the scope of their theories to address these and similar concerns. Aquinas himself devoted little attention to the church by comparison to his treatment of the sanctification of the individual Christian. The social aspect of sanctification thoroughly informs his treatment of doctrine, of course, but he says considerably more about the role of the Holy Spirit and the authority of Jesus Christ than Lindbeck and Hauerwas. Moreover what Aquinas says is materially decisive for his account. Thus one possibility (there are many others) would be to extend the analysis of Aquinas's theology of the church and related doctrines along the lines Marshall indicates. That analysis is likely to find that Aquinas believes that the Christian cultural-linguistic system cannot adequately be described in non-theological terms, and that those terms will be necessarily reductive unless they are brought within theological accounts of church life and of the individual within the church. It is clear that all three theologians share this belief. It is their great achievement to have prepared the way for a contemporary theology of the church along the lines Aquinas may suggest, by providing us with some of the *ad hoc* philosophical and methodological tools for the job. It would be fascinating, to mention just one further possibility, to try to recast the doctrine of sanctification in a largely "logico-grammatical" way and thereby avoid extensive and confusing ontological descriptions of the person and work of the Holy Spirit and of the nature of the church.⁸⁸

Notes

- 1 Herbert McCabe is an obvious choice, but his influence, though perhaps extensive, is difficult to assess. Victor Prellor's work is also influential. It has been discussed in a recent collection of essays, *Grammar and Grace: Reformulations of Aquinas and Wittgenstein*, Jeffrey Stout and Robert McSwain, eds (London: SCM Press, 2004).
- 2 Full disclosure: so do I. George Lindbeck was my dissertation director. He is now professor emeritus. Hauerwas now teaches at Duke University and Marshall at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. Hauerwas was born in 1940, Lindbeck in 1923 and Marshall in 1955.
- 3 There is insufficient space to give a full account of their proposals. I limit myself to those aspects of their proposals where Lindbeck and Hauerwas have been especially influenced by Aquinas, and discuss Marshall's work quite reductively as a kind of extension of Lindbeck's.
- 4 George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster, 1984), henceforth cited as *ND*.
- 5 Among the more significant post-liberals are David Yeago, Russell R. Reno, Eugene Rogers, Jr. and William Placher (a far from complete list), among whom

- there is a wide and sometimes conflicting range of views and interests. Aside from Marshall and Rogers, none to my knowledge is influenced to any significant degree by Aquinas.
- 6 The article to which Marshall responds in particular is that of Colman E. O'Neill, "The Rule Theory of Doctrine and Propositional Truth," *The Thomist* 49 (1985), 417–42. Marshall's response is "Aquinas as Postliberal Theologian," *The Thomist* 53 (1989), 353–402. Lindbeck's "Response to Bruce Marshall," immediately follows in the same volume, 403–406.
 - 7 "Response to Bruce Marshall," 405.
 - 8 "Aquinas as Postliberal," 357.
 - 9 *ND*, 15.
 - 10 See the original English version of the Forward to the German Edition of *ND* in *The Church in a Postliberal Age*, James J. Buckley, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 196–200.
 - 11 *ND*, 7.
 - 12 *ND*, 131.
 - 13 *ND*, 16.
 - 14 *ND*, 24.
 - 15 *ND*, 31.
 - 16 *ND*, 38.
 - 17 Lindbeck refers to Peter Geach, *Mental Acts: Their Content and Their Objects* (London: Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1971).
 - 18 *ND*, 17.
 - 19 *ND*, 117. This implies a particular reading of Aquinas, of course. Lindbeck refers in a somewhat different context to Per Eric Persson, *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas*, J. A. R. MacKenzie, trans. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), which argues for such a reading. But Lindbeck doubtless came to this reading on his own accord.
 - 20 *ND*, 38.
 - 21 *ND*, 39.
 - 22 *ND*, 32.
 - 23 *ND*, 18.
 - 24 *ND*, 80.
 - 25 *ND*, 65. Lindbeck does not discuss Aquinas's virtue theory, but he is especially close here to Hauerwas's interpretation of Aquinas, for which see below.
 - 26 *ND*, 66.
 - 27 *ND*, 65. Lindbeck cites J. L. Austin, "Performative Utterances," in his *Philosophical Papers*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 232–53.
 - 28 Lindbeck refers to Antonin Sertillanges, *S. Aquinas d'Aquin* (Paris: Alcan, 1925) to support his "agnostic" reading of Aquinas (*ND*, 72, n. 28), as well as to later, analytically-informed interpreters, including David Burrell and Victor Prellor (*ND*, 71, n. 26).
 - 29 See *ST I*, q. 13, a. 3.
 - 30 *ND*, 67.
 - 31 Perhaps this would be true even of the Pope who called the crusades, to the extent that he would expect his crusaders to say and do things our example does. Lindbeck's theory leaves substantial room for theological discussion of sin and failure, and thus of the *sola fide* and *sola Christi* of orthodox Lutheranism.
 - 32 *ND*, 107.

- 33 This is, of course, by no means a complete account of Lindbeck's theory of doctrine, which is beyond our purpose to explore further.
- 34 Bruce D. Marshall, *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- 35 Bruce D. Marshall, *Christology in Conflict: The Identity of a Saviour in Rahner and Barth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); henceforth *CiC*.
- 36 *CiC*, 44–46.
- 37 Marshall draws here upon Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974).
- 38 *CiC*, 105.
- 39 *CiC*, 188.
- 40 *CiC*, 105.
- 41 *CiC*, 193, n. 21.
- 42 *CiC*, 176.
- 43 Marshall cites Aquinas's Commentary on Romans, 1,2 n. 35.
- 44 *ScG*, 4.39.1; *CiC*, 179, 197.
- 45 *CiC*, 181.
- 46 Lindbeck recognizes the difference, of course. See *ND*, 66, where he notes Aquinas's "modest propositionalism" and points out that it is not inconsistent with the rule theory of doctrine.
- 47 *CiC*, 182.
- 48 *CiC*, 183.
- 49 *CiC*, 183.
- 50 *CiC*, 188.
- 51 See, for example, his *Residents Aliens* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1989), written with William H. Willimon.
- 52 I suspect that Hauerwas would think that the polemics follows logically from the constructive proposals. Perhaps, though, Aquinas's own theology offers a number of ways to avoid what seems to be the rather negative stance towards the world apparent in Hauerwas's more recent work.
- 53 Robin Gill views Hauerwas's career as having roughly three stages. See Gill, *Churchgoing and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 13–30. Jeffrey Stout traces a similar trajectory in his *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), esp. 139–61.
- 54 *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University Press, 1975); henceforth cited as *CCL*.
- 55 *CCL*, 1.
- 56 *CCL*, 3.
- 57 *CCL*, 8.
- 58 *CCL*, 37.
- 59 *CCL*, 37, n. 2.
- 60 Many of Hauerwas's themes are sounded independently in the work of the Roman Catholic moral theologian, Servais Pinckaers, whose book, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, M. T. Noble, trans. (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1995) was published originally in France in 1985.
- 61 *CCL*, 70.
- 62 *CCL*, 63.
- 63 *CCL*, 42.
- 64 *CCL*, 43.

- 65 CCL, 107.
- 66 CCL, 11.
- 67 CCL, 194.
- 68 CCL, 203.
- 69 CCL, 211.
- 70 CCL, 210.
- 71 *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); henceforth cited as *CC* and *PK* respectively.
- 72 See *PK*, 35–49, for another essay against the ahistorical, noumenal self that ethicists have drawn from Kant (whether they are entirely justified in doing so is another matter).
- 73 *CC*, 139.
- 74 *CC*, 143.
- 75 Stanley Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 128. Henceforth cited as *Sanctify*.
- 76 *PK*, 24–29.
- 77 *PK*, 5. Hauerwas has had MacIntyre as an interlocutor throughout his career, here MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1981/4). MacIntyre has his own reading of Aquinas, the influence of which upon Hauerwas would be too scholastic to trace. In his *Democracy and Tradition*, Stout argues that MacIntyre's influence has not been beneficial for Hauerwas.
- 78 *PK*, 99. What is wrong with natural law is summed up in *PK*, 63–64.
- 79 *PK*, xvi.
- 80 Brad J. Kallenberg, *Ethics As Grammar: Changing the Postmodern Subject* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), has rightly drawn attention to the Wittgensteinian aspects of this move, as to Hauerwas's use of Wittgenstein more generally. It is noteworthy that Kallenberg seems to see little or no influence of Aquinas upon Hauerwas.
- 81 Not incidentally, Hauerwas acknowledges his debt to Herbert McCabe in this essay, particularly to his book, *What is Ethics all About* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1969), published in the UK as *Law, Love and Language* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968). Hauerwas regards this "as one of the genuinely great books written in ethics over the past fifty years" (*Sanctify*, 54, n. 40). McCabe's reading of Aquinas on the Decalogue informs Hauerwas's discussion.
- 82 *Sanctify*, 46.
- 83 *Sanctify*, 45.
- 84 *Sanctify*, 57.
- 85 *Sanctify*, 57.
- 86 See *Resident Aliens*, 112–43, for a wonderful description of a congregation discussing ethical issues that leaves those who are members of hierarchical churches with lots of unanswered questions.
- 87 Kathryn Tanner has addressed some aspects of this problem from a position that is somewhat sympathetic to Lindbeck, in her *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1997). Her discussion shares, I would argue, much with Aquinas's own understanding of the church's growth in knowledge, though, to be sure, their positions are far from identical.
- 88 Fascinating to me, at least, and I plan to do so in a forthcoming article.

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Chapter Four

Aquinas and Searle on Singular Thoughts

Stephen Boulter

1. Introduction

In this chapter I want to make a modest but specific point in favor of a general proposal. The general proposal is that Analytical Thomists – a term I apply to those working within the philosophical tradition stemming from Moore, Russell and Frege who, while not giving Aquinas the *last* word on any philosophical topic, agree that he should be given the *first* word – ought seriously to consider the merits of developing a detailed and sustained dialogue between the work of Thomas Aquinas and that of John Searle. Most analytic philosophers with an interest in Aquinas have tended to focus, quite reasonably, on the light that Frege and Wittgenstein throw on the works of the great scholastic thinker, although recently we have also seen John Haldane bring the work of Dummett and the semantic anti-realists to bear on Aquinas.¹ But as far as I am aware, there has been no sustained discussion of the contribution Searle might offer the Analytical Thomist, despite his being widely recognized as one of the most eminent, if controversial, analytic philosophers of the mid-to-late twentieth century.

I will make some general points about the deep compatibility I see between the work of Aquinas and Searle in section four, but most of this chapter is devoted to making a modest, but not immediately obvious point which hints at further gains to be had from such a dialogue. I argue that there is a *prima facie* case to be made that Searle's work on the nature of reference in general, and of proper names in particular, can be used to tackle a tricky issue for Thomists, namely, Aquinas's strikingly modern but nonetheless uncomfortable claim that the intellect cannot entertain thoughts about, or be directed towards, particular objects or individuals *without* returning to the sense images or phantasms associated with those individuals. For convenience I will call this Aquinas's "controversial claim" on the nature of singular or *de re* thought. Prominent twentieth-century commentators on Aquinas have found this claim highly problematic despite the fact that views similar to it have found worthy champions in recent times. Kenny, for example, admits there was a time when he found it "shocking and incredible":

Shocking, because if it is impossible to have intellectual knowledge of an individual, it must be equally impossible to have spiritual love for an individual; for the will can relate only to what the intellect can grasp. Hence love between human individuals must be mere sensuality. Incredible, because one of the time-honoured paradigms of intellectual

activity is the formation of syllogisms such as “All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is mortal.”²

Although Kenny was eventually able to put his shock and incredulity aside and accept Aquinas’s position, not everyone has been able to do the same. Lonergan³ and Kretzmann,⁴ for example, have tried to weaken the claim, saying that it is not strictly necessary for the intellect always to think of individuals via phantasms, but that this is the intellect’s natural “tendency” or “orientation.”⁵ Pasnau does make an effort to defend Aquinas, hoping to preserve what he takes to be the theory’s “interest and originality;” but even he admits that “we can have discrete thoughts that are free from any sensory exemplars.”⁶

I will make no attempt to defend Aquinas’s controversial claim.⁷ In fact I will argue that it is doubly mistaken: it is not just that the intellect *can* be directed towards particulars without returning to sense images; but it is also a mistake to think that sense images or phantasms, as Aquinas understands them, would be of any use to the intellect in its endeavor to think of particulars. Aquinas does, however, have a rather interesting argument for his controversial claim, an argument reminiscent of some found within the analytic tradition; and I believe that by revisiting the twentieth century debate on the nature of reference, and the work of Searle in particular, we can begin to see how to defuse the argument that led Aquinas into error.⁸ But just as important, I want to suggest that Searle’s understanding of proper names shows the way to an account of the intellect’s ability to think of particulars that is consistent with Aquinas’s fundamental commitment to semantic internalism, while at the same time allowing one to drop the controversial claim. In short, it is an account of this aspect of the intellect’s relation to particulars that an Analytical Thomist should find attractive.⁹ But the larger moral of the story is that there is reason to think that the benefits of a dialogue between Aquinas and Searle are very likely to extend beyond the limits of this particular issue.

2. Aquinas on Thoughts of Individuals

Before we can apply Searle’s work to Aquinas’s views on the nature of thought, we need to review the reasons that led Aquinas to his characteristic claims. Aquinas maintains that while sense experience is always of particular objects or individuals, “singulars” as he sometimes calls them (*ST* I, q. 85, a. 1), thought is always and only of universals (*ST* I, q. 86, a. 1).¹⁰ The upshot of this Aristotelian doctrine in the hands of Aquinas is the surprising claim that the human intellect cannot think about particular objects or individuals “directly and immediately” by means of powers internal to it, but only indirectly by calling on sense images or “phantasms” provided by sensation (I, q. 85, a. 1, ad 5; I, q. 86, a. 1). To take an example, Aquinas appears to be saying that while one can think of human beings in general “directly and immediately” by employing the universal concept HUMAN BEING, one cannot think of any particular human being without simultaneously having an image of that person before the mind’s eye.¹¹

Aquinas's claims arise out of a set of prior commitments, particularly his theory of individuation by matter and the theory of abstraction. The former is the view that what makes an individual thing that particular individual is not the set of properties that individual has, but the very material stuff in which those properties are instantiated. Of the theory of abstraction we need only remind ourselves that the agent intellect is supposed to make individual material objects in the sensible world intelligible, and so thinkable, by abstracting their natures from the individualizing conditions of matter (I, q. 85). It is only once the intellect has been able to abstract the universal forms or properties of a given object that the object in the strict sense becomes thinkable at all, as opposed to being merely an object of sense perception. This is particularly important because Aquinas insists that having a sense perception of a particular *x* is not the same as having a thought of a particular *x*, although both are forms of cognition.¹² Non-human animals have sense perceptions of objects in their environments and to that extent they are aware of these objects. But the cognitive life of such animals is bereft of thought, as Aquinas here understands it, precisely because non-human animal intellects lack the ability (as far as we know) to rise from the particular to the universal via the mental process of abstraction, to the level where one can begin to conceptualize one's sense experience. It is because these abstracted forms are universals that thought is said to be first and foremost, or directly and immediately, *of* universals. Moreover, universals are not themselves objects of sense experience, despite the fact that (a) our knowledge of them is ultimately derived from sense experience, and (b) they exist extra mentally only in individual material objects.

This leaves the intellect's relationship to particular objects and individuals problematic. For according to Aquinas in his *Quodl.* 7.1.3c, if an intellect is to think of a particular "its likeness *insofar as it is particular* must be in the cognitive power."¹³ Taking "likeness" and "representation" to be functionally equivalent for present purposes,¹⁴ this can be rendered in more modern parlance as follows: in order for the intellect to have a thought of a particular *x*, the intellect must be able to represent that object to itself in such a way as to uniquely identify *x*. So much is, I believe, unproblematic.¹⁵ But what is of interest here as far as Aquinas's position is concerned is what he deems *insufficient* for this purpose. Most notably, a thought of a particular *x* is *not* achieved in virtue of the intellect's having an intentional species or representation identical in form to *x*. Aquinas is keen to stress this point. As he writes in his *QDA* 3.20:

If I were to speak of a human being who is white, musical, and whatever else of this sort I were to add to it, it would not yet be a singular. For it is possible that all these things put together could apply to more than one person.¹⁶

The reason the representation or description can apply to more than one person is that forms, being universals, apply to many particulars and cannot serve to pick out any one individual, regardless of the number of forms added to the likeness or representation. As Aquinas repeats elsewhere in his *QDV* 5, 2 "... however many universal forms you pile up, you never make them add up to anything singular. For

it always remains possible to think of that totality of forms being instantiated more than once.” Again, such likenesses or representations permit the intellect to think of x ’s in general, but not of some particular x . It is only once this set of universals is instantiated in a particular lump of matter that one has a true individual. But while material objects are sensible, they are not strictly speaking intelligible, and so, says Aquinas, the intellect cannot think of particulars using resources internal to itself. It must have recourse to a sense image of the particular in question provided by sensation.

Here Aquinas seems to be thinking along lines familiar to philosophers of language of the twentieth century. If we recast his claims in the more familiar language of Fregean senses, Aquinas appears to be arguing that there cannot be a complete Fregean sense for proper names.¹⁷ More accurately, Aquinas seems committed to the view that proper names can never be given a complete Fregean sense that is expressible in purely verbal form. I read Aquinas this way because the above quote suggests that a representation or description of a particular must be exhaustively analyzed in completely general terms, a view hinted at times by Frege but repudiated by Searle.¹⁸ This reading is supported by the emphasis Aquinas places on the role of the senses in the cognition of singulars. Discussing the case of an astronomer able to predict a future eclipse by identifying the courses of the heavenly bodies that will bring it about, Aquinas, *ST*I, q. 57, a. 2, writes:

To cognise a singular in this way in its universal causes is not to cognise it as it is singular – i.e. as it is here and now. For an astronomer cognising a future eclipse by computing the celestial movements knows the eclipse in the universal, but not as it is here and now – *unless he receives that knowledge through the senses*.¹⁹

Here Aquinas is stating as baldly as one would like that one cannot have any sort of cognition of a particular *in its particularity or uniqueness* without a sense image of that particular. This is the view we find expressed in q. 86 of the *ST*: strictly speaking the intellect relying solely on its own resources cannot be directed onto particulars, the reason being that the means available to the intellect, namely, Fregean senses couched in verbal form, are insufficient to the purpose. On the other hand, while sense perceptions put us in some sort of cognitive contact with particular x ’s, this cognitive contact falls below the level of thought. It is only when the intellect combines its Fregean senses with a return to sense images that the intellect is able to think *indirectly* of a particular x . Here we see Aquinas conceding that, at least in the case of particulars, the intentional content of the intellect alone is insufficient to secure reference, and that something external to the intellect must be brought into play.²⁰

What is remarkable about Aquinas’s position are the underlying assumptions about the nature of reference and mental representation. Those working within the analytic tradition have seen Putnam and others arrive at similar conclusions about the nature of reference, and for similar reasons. Putnam famously argued that meanings cannot be located in the heads of speakers because the intentional content of a speaker is insufficient to uniquely determine reference.²¹ In fact Putnam’s

famous twin earth thought experiment was designed to illustrate a point that Aquinas would have been quite willing to accept, namely that, in principle, two speakers could have precisely the same intentional content in the intellect and yet not be referring to or thinking about the same thing.

But Putnam's thought experiment reveals a point that Aquinas would have been less happy about, for it shows that even when the intellect *is* furnished with sense images determinate reference is still not secured. For, *ex hypothesi*, the intentional content of Aquinas and his twin earth doppelgänger when faced with water and twin earth water is supposed to be identical, right down to their sense images – and yet they cannot be taken to be referring to the same thing. The interesting point here for Thomists is that Putnam's experiment shows that sense images *qua* sense images do not individuate. And, if one follows Putnam, the only reason sense images can help in the cognition of particulars is that sense images are *caused* by particular objects in the external world. Aquinas's sense image of a particular dog, say, is of this particular dog, and not of some formally identical twin earth dog, only because that particular dog is the cause of Aquinas's sense image. Here we are invited to conclude that a thought of a particular is *not* secured by purely internal means (descriptions plus sense images) since the relation of successful reference between utterance of the name and the object referred to (or the relation of successful cognition between mind and object) is accounted for by some sort of external causal connection between mind and object.

Now following Putnam's lead appears to land us in the following uncomfortable dilemma: either Aquinas sticks with his semantic internalism and concedes that the intellect can *never* think of particular objects (directly *or* indirectly) or he must abandon his internalism and endorse some version of the causal theory of reference. The first option is truly shocking and incredible; but the second is also unacceptable to Aquinas because he would have to concede that the relation of successful thought and reference is accounted for by appealing to the *external* causal connection between mind and object, something he was always loath to do.²²

Although Aquinas was not aware of the extent of the difficulty of his position as I have presented it here (since he thought that sense images *did* allow the intellect indirectly to think of particulars) it seems nonetheless that even he was *not* entirely happy with the state of affairs as he understood them, at least not at first. For at one stage he did entertain the possibility that perhaps the intellect *could* think of particulars in their particularity without recourse to sense images by somehow describing the determinate matter (*materia signata*) of which a particular is composed, that is, the actual stuff that individuates the particular in question. But, as Pasnau relates, this proposal never came to anything because Aquinas was unable to give an account of how one could conceptualize determinate matter, and eventually he settled on (was resigned to?) his mature position as expressed in q. 86, a. 1.²³ But his contemporaries were not so easily satisfied. Scotus, for example, famously suggested that each particular could be a direct object of thought for the unaided intellect on account of each object's distinctive "thisness" or *haecceitas*. According to the Scotist line, a particular's *haecceitas* is the *forma individualis* of the particular, and as a form it is something thinkable; but unlike other forms a

particular's individual form was thought to individuate that particular.²⁴ While such an approach could have some attraction for Aquinas, at least insofar as it preserves the commitment to internalism and his strict version of the description theory of reference, it is far from obvious that Aquinas could have accepted a notion that from his point of view is simply a contradiction in terms – forms *qua* forms simply cannot individuate. The futility of the Scotus line was certainly recognized by Ockham, and he eventually chose to impale himself on the second horn of the dilemma, granting causal relations house-room in his theory of cognition at least with respect to intuitive cognitions.²⁵

It is at this point that we can begin to see why Searle might be able to provide a way out of this dilemma. Searle is just as keen a defender of semantic internalism and the description theory of reference as is Aquinas. And Searle has managed to produce a vigorous response to Putnam's twin earth thought experiment in particular, and to the arguments of the causal theorists in general, in his defense of semantic internalism. Might there not be something here for the Analytical Thomist?

3. Searle on Proper Names

Let us pause briefly to take stock. We have seen Aquinas describing an odd view. In effect Aquinas is saying that there is a strict divide between sense experience and thought. If an object is a possible object of sense experience then one cannot think of it directly, and if one can have a direct thought of something, then that thing cannot be the object of a sense experience. But presumably what we would like to be able to say is (a) that it is a contingent fact that some sensed objects are not the objects of a direct thought (because we don't bother to conceptualize and think about *all* aspects of our sensory experience, focusing instead on the biologically and socially important information contained in the sensory array); (b) that it is true that the objects of *some* direct thoughts cannot be sensed – universals and numbers are good examples; but (c) that in the vast majority of cases the objects of sense and the objects of thought are identical. Moreover, we would like to be able to show that this is entirely consistent with Aquinas's theory of individuation, the theory of abstraction and semantic internalism. For present purposes we can set (a) and (b) aside, and focus entirely on (c). The task, then, is to determine how there can be complete Fregean senses for proper names that make no use of sense images.

It is here, I submit, that Searle's work on the nature of reference is of use to Analytical Thomists. Searle shares Aquinas's concern to preserve the central idea that successful reference and thought are secured by the referent or object of thought satisfying the intentional content of the speaker. But Searle shows no sign of Aquinas's difficulty regarding thought of particulars without the appropriate sense images. The difference between Aquinas and Searle on this point can be illustrated most clearly (and surprisingly) by quoting a passage in which Searle discusses a case virtually identical to one Aquinas himself considered. Searle writes:

... there may be names in the community that are introduced purely by description. Suppose that the astronomers and meteorologists of the community are able to predict storms and astronomical events in the future and that they attach names to these future events and phenomena. These names are taught to all the members of the community purely by description and there isn't any question of the events causing the names because the events are in the future.²⁶

We can also add that there is no question in such a case of there being any sense images of these events either. Now in exactly this case Aquinas would say that the astronomers and the rest of the community think of these future astrological events only universally. They are not thought of in their particularity, because, being in the future, these thoughts have not been received through the senses. Now we have already seen that this line is untenable since sense images, as Aquinas understands them, do not individuate. But how is Searle able to account for thought of particulars without sense images?

The key to Searle's success in this regard is that he does not deprive the intellect of the necessary resources. Most likely as a consequence of his focusing on the theory of abstraction, Aquinas paints a picture of the intellect as having nothing to go on but Fregean senses in isolation. By contrast, Searle insists on two points: (a) that these Fregean senses have to be embedded in what he calls the "Network" and the "Background" before they can be used to say or think anything determinate; and (b) that Aquinas's account of the internal nature of these senses lacks a crucial ingredient. These points are central to what Searle calls his "holistic internalism," as opposed to what one might call Aquinas's "atomistic internalism."²⁷ In this section I simply want to review how these extra resources allow Searle to provide a complete Fregean sense for proper names, and to suggest that there is no reason in principle, so far as I can see, that prevents the Analytical Thomist from helping themselves to this conceptual equipment.

A complete account and critical examination of the notions of the Network and Background goes beyond what is possible here, but a few brief remarks should suffice to indicate their importance to our present concern. First the Network.²⁸ Searle argues that, contrary to widespread opinion, apparently simply and straightforward statements like "The cat is on the mat" lack determinate truth conditions when considered in isolation, and so lack any determinate sense when considered in isolation. Searle's claim is that the senses of the terms appearing in this statement, when taken together (along with the syntactical rules according to which they are combined), are not sufficient to determine under what conditions the statement is true or false. Searle contends, I think convincingly, that the meaning of such a statement becomes determinate only when it is embedded in a Network of other beliefs. As Searle points out, if the meaning of the statement "The cat is on the mat" seems anything but vague or indeterminate, this is because we fail to notice that we unconsciously bring to the statement all kinds of beliefs and expectations that have little to do with the lexical meaning of the terms in the statement. For example, we are most likely to be unconsciously assuming that this statement is uttered at, or close to, the surface of the earth, that the earth's gravity is pulling the

cat towards the centre of the earth, that the mat intervenes between the cat and the earth, and so on. These beliefs form part of our wider Network of beliefs, more or less unconsciously held. Now Searle's point is that it is only against this backdrop of beliefs that the truth conditions of the statement "The cat is on the mat" become determinate. Searle's defends this point by showing that if we change the Network, we become far less certain about the conditions under which the statement "The cat is on the mat" is true, which is enough to show that the senses of the constituent terms taken together (in addition to the relevant syntactic rules) are not sufficient to determine meaning. To continue Searle's example, if we shift the scene to outer space and we see a cat float past the window of our space craft, while directly "beneath" and in contact with the cat is a mat, would we say that the cat is on the mat? In a gravity free zone there is no real up or down, no on or under, and gravity is certainly not responsible for keeping the cat in contact with the mat. Searle's point here is that we are not quite sure what we ought to say in this context, despite the fact that the literal meanings of the terms in the statement have not changed. Searle concludes that this is because the meaning of the statement is determinate only against the backdrop of the Network: change the Network, change the truth conditions.

How does this apply to proper names? Consider Searle's treatment of Keith Donnellan's allegedly problematic statement "Thales is the Greek Philosopher who held that all is water."²⁹ There is a description associated with the name "Thales" which includes the idea that he was the philosopher who theorized that everything is made of water. But, asks Donnellan, what would we say if it turned out that it was not Thales who introduced this idea, but an otherwise unknown well digger? Would this mean that in our use of the name "Thales" we have been referring to this well digger all along? It is difficult to see how Aquinas could avoid this line of reasoning; worse, he might have to conclude that in the utterance of the name "Thales" in the context of this statement no successful reference to *any* individual was made at all because nothing was (or could be) uniquely identified by the description since, in principle, it is always possible for more than one individual to fit any given description. But Searle avoids these conclusions by insisting that we bring the Network to bear on the question. He writes:

When we say 'Thales is the Greek philosopher who held that all is water', we don't just mean *anybody* who held that all is water, we mean that person who was known to other Greek philosophers as arguing that all is water, who was referred to in his time or subsequently by some Greek variant or predecessor of the expression we now pronounce as 'Thales', whose works and ideas have come down to us posthumously through the writings of other authors, and so on.³⁰

Now, according to Searle, there is no question of saying that all of this extra intentional content is included in the associated description of the name "Thales." If we were to go down that line, we would find that the description associated with the name "Thales" would be virtually endless, as each additional phrase added to the description would itself need to have further Network statements supplied in order to

make each additional phrase determinate. This would make the description implausibly large. Far better to insist that it is only within this broad Network of beliefs that the Fregean sense associated with the name "Thales" can be used to refer to the intended target. But the important point for Analytical Thomists is that there seems to be no reason in principle why this extra intentional content should not be available to the intellect, and, since in this case at least, this extra content is expressed in entirely verbal form, this extra content need not contain any sense images.

As to the Background: it is not just against the backdrop of a Network of beliefs that meanings and senses become determinate – which is just as well because the difficulties associated with meaning holism lurk around the corner. Searle contends that meanings are also anchored in a set of capacities that have nothing to do with representation *per se*. Again to use one of Searle's examples, while I know very well what someone means if they say "John peeled an orange," I have no clear idea what is meant by the statements "John peeled a car" or "John peeled the Sun." I understand the first statement about John peeling oranges because I know the senses of the constituent terms as well as the appropriate syntactic rules, but also because peeling an orange is something I can do, something I have seen others do, something that is well within human non-representational capacities. On the other hand, despite the fact that I know the meanings of the terms involved in the second and third statements, I do not know under what conditions they might be true; indeed they seem perfectly senseless. And Searle's highly plausible explanation for this failure is that it is due to the fact that we cannot fit such actions into the Background of our non-representational capacities.

Now the point about the Network and Background for present purposes is simply that Aquinas is working with a particularly impoverished account of the intentional content available to the intellect. Aquinas's worry is that meanings are indeterminate when considered in isolation; Searle's rejoinder is that this is undoubtedly true, but the intellect has more to go on than isolated Fregean senses.

But perhaps Aquinas would reply that even unisolated Fregean senses are insufficient to individuate a particular. Would the argument he put forward regarding the insufficiency of piling form upon form not equally apply to the piling of Fregean sense upon Fregean sense, Network upon Background? I believe that Searle's contention here would be that it is not simply a matter of the number of senses one piles up, but the nature of those senses as well. From a Searlean point of view, Aquinas's account of Fregean senses is itself incomplete. On Aquinas's picture the intentional content associated with a name, say, "Socrates," is confined to the lexical component of the description: the philosopher forced to drink hemlock by the Athenian state; the mentor of Plato; the philosopher married to Xanthippe and thought to have been a stone mason, and so on. But Searle insists that there is more to the Fregean sense associated with "Socrates" than these lexical elements, and that this is true of many if not most proper names and many other intentional states. This extra component can be seen most clearly in Searle's analysis of perceptual experiences.

When considering the nature of our experience of causation, Searle says something rather surprising: "... in perception, physical events and states cause our

experiences. But in each case we are directly aware of the causal nexus because in each case *part of the content of the experience* is that it is the experience of something causing or being caused.”³¹ Searle’s primary point here is about the nature of our experience of causation; but I wish to draw attention to the point about the content of our perceptual experiences. The point is that the causal relation between physical objects and our perceptual faculties “is *internal* to the experience.”³² So when one has a perceptual experience of a flower, say, “part of the content of the experience is that this experience is caused by the fact that there is a flower there.”³³ And this is so because the experience is not of just any flower that happens to be formally identical to the one in one’s perceptual experience, but of the very flower in front of me, and of that flower’s actually causing one’s perceptual experience of it.

Is this a concession to externalism? Searle does acknowledge the importance of causal relations in a way that Aquinas could not bring himself to do. But Searle’s point here is that the causal relationship between flower and perception is *not* external to the mind, but is rather an *internal* component of that perception. Internalizing the causal relationship and making it an essential part of the perceptual experience itself is a key component of Searle’s response to Putnam’s twin earth thought experiment. Putnam contends, and Aquinas would agree, that the intentional content of Aquinas and twin earth Aquinas is always identical. But if this is the case, then, since all agree that Aquinas has a perception of this earth flower and not a twin earth flower, the cognitive connection must be made in virtue of an external causal relation and not in virtue of the internal intentional content of Aquinas’s experience. Searle’s point is that this is to misunderstand the nature of the perceptual experience. While the flower in this case remains in the external world and is not part of the intentional content of the perception of it, the causal relationship between flower and perception is itself internal to that perceptual experience because that causal relationship is part of the conditions of satisfaction of that experience (which is to say that the experience is what it is and has the content that it has in part because of the way it came about – it would not be *that* experience if the causal relationship in question were other than it is). The point here is that, if Searle is right, the intentional content of Aquinas and twin earth Aquinas is *not* identical, as Putnam and Aquinas had supposed, because the conditions of satisfaction of the respective intentional states are not identical. So despite the fact that Searle grants causal relations a role in the account of our cognition of particulars, there is nothing in Putnam’s thought experiment to threaten his basic principle, viz. that intentional contents *alone* uniquely determine reference. In fact, if Searle is right, the dispute between semantic externalists and internalists entirely disappears because the externalist is not insisting on anything the internalist cannot accept.³⁴

Now if we accept this account of the nature of perceptual experience, the door is then open to consider the possibility that other intentional states have this extra non-lexical component as part of their content and their respective conditions of satisfaction. If we return to our example of the name “Socrates,” and analyze the Fregean sense associated with the name, we find that it includes all those lexical elements mentioned above (that is, the philosopher put to death by the Athenian state; mentor of Plato; married to Xanthippe; worked as a stone mason, and so on).

We must also add here that part of the content of our associated description is that the description itself is the result of the fact that there was a particular man, Socrates, who is the ultimate source of our notions associated with that name. We have the description of Socrates that we do, not because there is an identical twin earth Socrates, but because the earth Socrates that lived in earth Athens provoked a response from other earth Athenians whose writings have come down to us containing accounts of the doings and sayings of earth Socrates. Consequently, when we use the name “Socrates” we could not really be referring to twin earth Socrates or to any other person who might fit the associated lexical description because our intentional content is such that we are referring to the particular individual who satisfies (a good portion of) the associated lexical description *and* is the ultimate source of that very description.

Note that in this beefed-up account of the description associated with the name “Socrates,” and by extension of our thought of the individual Socrates, there is no mention of sense images – which is just as well since none of us have any sense images of Socrates. But is there any reason to doubt that this description uniquely identifies Socrates apart from all other possible individuals, and so satisfies the conditions placed on the nature of our thought of particulars in their particularity? What more could we reasonably ask for? And if we accept Searle’s point that there is more to some Fregean senses than the purely lexical component, do we not have good reason to think that this thought has been achieved without appeal to factors external to the intellect? In short, if these two not entirely implausible points are granted, then we have the beginnings of an account of our cognition of singulars consistent with Aquinas’s commitment to semantic internalism which gives us no reason to accept, and every reason to deny, that our thoughts of individuals must always be indirect via sense images – which is precisely what we were seeking.

4. Some Questions

I do not take myself to have shown that Aquinas’s difficulties regarding the intellect’s relation to singulars have been resolved. All I believe has been established is the modest point that there is at least a *prima facie* case that in Searle we find conceptual equipment that can be used to handle this tricky issue. The solution sketched above is, of course, only as sound as the conceptual tools borrowed from Searle, and Analytical Thomists will want to submit these to serious examination before committing themselves to them.³⁵ But I see nothing within the theories of individuation and abstraction which in principle prevents their adoption by Analytical Thomists. That said, some obvious questions remain that ought to be addressed in the limited space remaining.

4.1 *Does Anything Important in Aquinas Depend on this Rejected Claim?*

While it might be the case that Aquinas could adopt Searle’s conceptual equipment, and amplify the resources available to the intellect, one might reasonably wonder if

Aquinas could accept the results of this particular application of them. One obvious question then is whether Aquinas can do without his controversial claim regarding the nature of our thought of particulars. Since theses are invariably logically related to others, we need to ask what the impact on Aquinas's system would be if this particular claim were removed. If the cost is too high, some might want to resist the claims forwarded in sections two and three.

I do not believe that the cost of dropping the controversial claim is particularly problematic for Aquinas, although this is far from obvious. One source of confidence in this regard is Kretzmann's detailed account of Aquinas's theory of cognition without ever mentioning it specifically, let alone insisting upon it.³⁶ Nonetheless, there are at least two areas of possible concern. Firstly, one could possibly see an indirect threat to Aquinas's claim that the intellect is immaterial; secondly, dropping the problematic claim could open the door to the threat of skepticism. I will say something briefly about each in turn.

4.1(a) Regarding the immateriality of the soul. Aquinas does have reasons for insisting upon the controversial claim in addition to the argument from the nature of reference we have been discussing so far. Aquinas provides an additional argument based on the allegedly immaterial nature of the intellect combined with the empirical fact that damage to the brain impairs the activity of the intellect. Aquinas takes himself to have shown that the intellect is immaterial by arguing that the intellect makes no use of any bodily organ in its activities. Aquinas then needs to explain why it is that damage to the brain impairs the intellect's ability to carry out its normal operations. Aquinas's answer to his own question is that the immaterial intellect must need to return to phantasms contained in the material brain in order to carry out its activities, a conclusion we have seen him reach on other independent grounds. If this were so, then intellectual impairment would be precisely what we should expect upon damage to the brain.

However, now that we have found fault in the independent reasoning behind the claim that the intellect must return to phantasms in order to think of particulars, Aquinas's explanation of the recalcitrant empirical fact regarding the effects of brain damage is undermined. And if Aquinas cannot adequately explain why damage to the brain impairs the activities of the allegedly immaterial intellect, then the plausibility of the thesis concerning the immateriality of the intellect is similarly undermined. Thus we see that the problematic thesis concerning the nature of our thought of singulars is indirectly related to Aquinas's case for the immateriality of the intellect.

I grant that Aquinas's position on the immateriality of the intellect is threatened, albeit indirectly, if the problematic claim regarding the intellect's relation to singulars is dropped. But there are several things wrong with Aquinas's explanation of the effects of brain damage upon intellectual capacities, the seriousness of which go well beyond the worries raised by dropping the problematic claim. Firstly, it is not at all clear that the claim that the intellect must return to sense images contained in the brain to carry out its activities is consistent with the other key claim that the intellect makes no use of any bodily organ. This appears to

be a flat contradiction as long as Aquinas continues to claim that entertaining singular propositions is an activity of the intellect. But more importantly, the argument by which Aquinas claims to have shown that the intellect is immaterial, a claim which figures as a premise in the argument we are now considering, is widely recognized to be invalid.³⁷ My point here is that the real threat to Aquinas's claims regarding the immateriality of the intellect comes not from dropping the problematic claim regarding the intellect's need to return to sense images in order to think of individuals, but from the fact that it is so poorly supported in the first instance.

4.1(b) A threat of skepticism? Kenny has expressed the view that dropping the problematic claim will open the door to the sorts of skeptical worries that have become familiar since Descartes.³⁸ Since part of the attraction of Aquinas is his avoidance of skepticism, this result would be most unwelcome indeed. But it seems to me that Kenny's worries can be dealt with effectively.

Kenny's concern is based on the view that if one drops the controversial claim, then the only way to account for the ability of the intellect to think of particulars is to accept some version of the Scotus strategy, viz., accept that there are individuating forms. But, says Kenny, this opens the door to skepticism. The reason for this claim is that, on the Scotus line, it would be possible for there to be a form in the intellect whose corresponding individual does not exist, since individuals, unlike universals, come into and pass out of existence. Now what this possibility shows is that in this case the form in the intellect is not "identical" with the individual whose individuating form it is, but only a "representation" of it. Thus a gap is introduced between thought and object, thereby opening the door to skepticism. Kenny then goes on to say that Aquinas keeps this gap firmly shut "because there is nothing in the mind that the mind has not created."³⁹

There is much that one could say about this argument, particularly regarding the nature of the identity that is supposed to obtain between the intentionally existing individuating form, and that form as it exists in an extra mental particular; and whether answers to the question we have been considering: how can the intellect uniquely identify an individual in thought and language?, have immediate implications for answers to the very different question: how can an intellect come to know something about a particular object or individual? But the important points for present purposes are as follows:

Firstly, if Kenny's argument is sound then the threat of skepticism hangs over the head of Aquinas as well as Scotus. Kenny's point is that on the Scotus line there can be a form in the intellect whose corresponding individual no longer exists, and this shows that the form is a representation of, and not identical with, the corresponding object. Kenny appears to think that Aquinas is free from this threat because the forms that Aquinas recognizes are all universal in nature, and so cannot be representations of any particular individual in the real world, thus avoiding opening the door to skepticism. But in these post-Darwinian times we now know that species – understood as the class of all individuals falling under a universal term and the corresponding object to universals in the intellect – go into and out of

existence in speciation and extinction events, and so a precisely analogous difficulty hounds Aquinas as much as Scotus.

Secondly, it seems to me that Kenny is operating with a false dilemma. He assumes that the intellect's thought of singulars is achieved either indirectly via phantasms or directly via an individuating form. The idea then is that if we reject Aquinas's position, we must accept the skeptical consequences of Scotus's position. But unless one were willing to argue that Searle's account of the reference of proper names amounts to a revival of a version of Scotus's individuating forms, we see that there is in fact a third alternative. Searle provides an account of our thoughts of singulars that makes no reference to individuating forms; so, until Searle's alternative is tried and found wanting, Kenny's threat of skepticism is blocked.

I will not pretend that there might not be other unwelcome consequences that I have not seen which follow upon the dropping of Aquinas's controversial claim. But it seems to me that these two worries at least need not deter us from taking such a step.

4.2 *A Lucky One-off?*

While I think a *prima facie* case can be made that in this particular instance Searle's work can be used to help Aquinas, one might wonder if this is just a lucky "one-off." Why, one might ask, should we expect this result to be mirrored in other quarters?

As I said at the outset, I believe there is a deep compatibility between Aquinas and Searle, despite the obvious difference over Aquinas's claim regarding the immateriality of the intellect. But I hope I have managed to go some way to establishing that Searle has conceptual tools that could profitably be incorporated into the perennial philosophy. As for the question as to whether this result might be a lucky one-off, I can do no more at this stage than to end with a brief and somewhat loose and impressionistic survey of some of their common commitments, and suggest that these shared commitments are likely to lead to the development of conceptual tools that can be applied in a common endeavor.

4.2(a) Aquinas and Searle are metaphysical realists. I take it as read that Aquinas was indeed a metaphysical realist and so I will focus instead on what Searle has had to say on this point.⁴⁰ Unfortunately some comment on Searle's commitment to metaphysical realism is needed since he appears to wobble somewhat on precisely this subject. There is no doubt that Searle endorses the key elements of metaphysical realism in his later work, calling them "default positions."⁴¹ He writes that "There is a real world that exists independently of us, independently of our experiences, our thoughts, our language," and that "We have direct perceptual access to that world through our senses, especially touch and vision."⁴² With this Aquinas would be entirely in agreement. But there is at least one occasion where Searle appears to say something entirely at odds with metaphysical realism, and some comment here is required.

In *Intentionality*, Searle writes that “The world does not come to us already divided up into objects; we have to divide it; and how we divide it is up to our system of representation, and in that sense it is up to us, even though the system is biologically, culturally, and linguistically shaped.”⁴³ This passage has the unmistakable flavor of the neo-Kantian constructivism we associate with the McDowell of *Mind and World* and Putnam in his internal realism phase.

Given what Searle says elsewhere it is not obvious how this passage should be read, indeed it looks distinctly out of place. On its most obvious interpretation, it is simply false.⁴⁴ But curiously nothing in Searle’s work seems to depend on its being true, and he has recently gone out of his way to distance himself from the obvious interpretation of his former views.⁴⁵ Indeed, Searle’s own oft-repeated point that statements and propositions have a mind-to-world direction of fit seems to demand that the world be as it is *prior* to, and independently of, our representations of it. If this were not the case it would be grossly misleading to describe the direction of fit as mind-to-world, since there must be something determinate there already for the mind to “fit” with. The less obvious (and possibly forced) interpretation of the passage is that Searle is on his way to making an important structural point about the nature of mental states rather than an ontological point about the independence or otherwise of the external world. I suggest that this passage be read in the light of what Searle says elsewhere about intentional states having an “aspectual” shape due to the fact that all objects of thought are thought about from a particular perspective captured in Fregean senses. In this sense one might say that objects are not just given to us, if by “given to us” one means that such an object is immediately able to be an object of thought. To be an object of thought (as opposed to perception) an object must be approached from a particular vantage-point, a vantage-point which includes our culture and language. In any case it is heartening to see Searle distancing himself from the obvious interpretation of this passage.

4.2(b) Rejection of the epistemological turn. One of the standard reasons given for the increasing interest in the work of Aquinas amongst philosophers is that he is not concerned with the challenge of radical skepticism, commonly thought to have been brought to the forefront of philosophical concern by Descartes. Aquinas takes it for granted that human beings are capable of knowing and understanding aspects of our world, and, to the extent that he is interested in epistemological issues, the focus tends to be on explaining *how* this is achieved rather than showing *that* it can be done. As Pasnau has noted, Aquinas and the Scholastics generally offer more in the way of theories of cognition than epistemologies in the modern sense.⁴⁶ Now the rejection of Descartes’s epistemological turn is a theme on which Searle himself lays much stress, something which distinguishes him from many working in the analytic tradition. In one of his pithy remarks, he says “I think our obsession with epistemology was a three hundred year mistake.”⁴⁷ This attitude is reflected in the fact that Searle has very little to say about current epistemological issues, choosing instead to focus on ontological matters.

4.2(c) *Common sense.* Perhaps as a consequence of putting skepticism to one side, the work of both Aquinas and Searle shows a certain hard-headed common sense. Haldane rightly points out that Aristotelians are

... trying to identify at the level of metaphysical description what is implicit in our everyday dealings with the world Contrary to the impression created by the philosophical vocabulary ... it is, in Strawson's terms, more a descriptive than a revisionary metaphysics. Put even more directly I would say that [Aristotelians are providing] a philosophical defence of common sense.⁴⁸

For his part, Searle stands at the end of a distinguished line of analytic thinkers with a similar commitment to common sense, including Moore, the later Wittgenstein, Austin and Grice. In this regard it is interesting to note that Searle has little time for the exciting paradoxes and revisionary views that have captured the attention of those working on the philosophy of language within the analytic tradition. When Searle discusses these topics: Logical Positivism, Quine's attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction, Quine's indeterminacy of translation and ontological relativity, Putnam's internal realism, Kripke's Wittgenstein, it is usually to show that these positions are absurd and that they stem from untenable philosophies of mind.

4.2(d) *Aquinas and Searle are proponents of semantic mentalism or internalism.* Although neither Aquinas nor Searle accepts a common assumption of many internalists, namely, the autonomy of the mental, it never occurred to Aquinas or any other scholastic thinker that meanings could be anywhere else but in the head, and Searle has strongly defended this view despite its being very much a minority position, even ridiculed, within the analytic tradition. This common ground leads to the further similarity in their shared understanding of the relation between thought and language. Searle's thesis that language has only derived intentionality, an intentionality *imposed* upon it by the mind, could have been accepted by Aquinas without demure.

4.2(e) *Aquinas and Searle are sympathetic to the sciences.* Although Aquinas was not a scientist himself, Aristotle certainly was, as was Aquinas's teacher Albertus Magnus. And much has been made of the fact that Aquinas tried to make his theology into a science on the Aristotelian model.⁴⁹ Searle for his part, unlike many other Ordinary Language philosophers, shows a keen awareness of what is happening in the sciences, sees philosophy as continuous with the sciences, and has the singular distinction of having much of his early work on speech acts pass out of philosophy into the science of linguistics.

I suggest that these points of agreement provide a strong basis for a fruitful dialogue between Aquinas and Searle, and that few other analytic thinkers provide such a neat fit with Aquinas's basic commitments. Of course there are differences of opinion on important matters; but there would have to be if an interesting exchange of views were to be possible. The crucial point is that these differences

occur against the backdrop of widespread agreement on issues both take to be fundamental.⁵⁰

Notes

- 1 See John Haldane, "The Mind-World Identity Theory and the Anti-Realist Challenge," in *Reality, Representation and Projection*, Haldane & Wright, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 15–37. For discussion of Haldane see my "Could Aquinas Accept Semantic Anti-Realism?" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 48 (1998): 504–13 and my "Could Aquinas Reject Semantic Realism?" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 50 (2000): 515–18. See also Gabriele De Anna, "Mind-World Identity Theory and Semantic Realism: Haldane and Boulter on Aquinas," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 50 (2000): 82–87.
- 2 Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London: Routledge, 1993), 112.
- 3 Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1967), 160.
- 4 Norman Kretzmann, "Philosophy of Mind," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, N. Kretzmann & E. Stump, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 142.
- 5 But it is significant that Kretzmann's account of Aquinas on this issue does *not* deal with the specific arguments that led Aquinas to make the controversial claim.
- 6 Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 292.
- 7 We must distinguish two aspects of Aquinas's theory of the intellect's relation to particulars. Firstly, there is the claim that one cannot *know* anything of a particular without having sense experience of it. Secondly, there is the claim that one cannot be *directed in thought towards* a particular unless one calls to mind a sense image of that particular either from memory or from current sensory experience. I will have nothing to say about the first claim in this chapter. The second claim is the object of my attention here.
- 8 Aquinas has other, weaker, arguments for this position in addition to the one I will examine in detail here. See *ST I*, q. 84, a. 7. See Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas*, 284–95, for an extended discussion of these.
- 9 Due to space constraints there can be no attempt here to systematically defend Searle's views against the many challenges that have been levied against them by his contemporaries. I confine myself to showing that there is nothing in them that Aquinas could not accept, and refer readers to Searle's "Response: Reference and Intentionality," in *John Searle and his Critics*, Lepore & van Gulick, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
- 10 I use "particulars," "particular object," "individuals" or "singulars" interchangeably, shifting from one to another for stylistic reasons alone.
- 11 Aquinas writes: "... it is the universal that the intellect understands directly by means of the species, and singulars (represented in sense images) only indirectly. And it is in this way that it formulates the proposition, 'Socrates is a man'." *ST I*, q. 86, a. 1.
- 12 Again Aquinas is following Aristotle who clearly differentiates thought from sense perception. He writes: "If there is nothing apart from individuals, there will be no object of thought, but all things will be objects of sense, and there will be no knowledge of anything, unless we say that sensation is knowledge." *In meta.* bk. III, ch. 3, 999b0–999b5.

- 13 *Quodl.* 7.1.3c, emphasis added. Quoted from Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 104.
- 14 I take the view, following Kretzmann, "Philosophy of Mind," 154, that "likenesses" ought to be viewed *not* as images but as "encodings involving no iconic resemblance" where information received from the external world in the form of sensory stimulus is recast into neurologically based structures in the brain.
- 15 This is certainly the majority view, accepted by Russell, Strawson, Searle and Evans among others. For a dissenting view see Kent Bach, *Thought and Reference* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), ch. 2.
- 16 *DQA*, 3.20, quoted from Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 104.
- 17 Although there are important differences between Aquinas's "likenesses" and "representations," and between these and "descriptions" or "Fregean senses," they are similar in that all are means by which something is cognised. Here I am taking advantage of the widely accepted point that the question "How does language relate to reality?" is only a special case of the question "How does the mind relate to reality?" See Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 197.
- 18 Searle, *Intentionality*, 232.
- 19 *ST* I, q 57, a.2. *emphasis added*.
- 20 This is a concession that Kenny is also willing to make. In his commentary on Aquinas's position he writes: "... the intellect is, above all, the human capacity to master language and to think those thoughts which are expressible only in language. There is no way in which we can uniquely identify an individual in language without going outside language itself and latching on to the context within which the language is used." Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 112–13.
- 21 Hilary Putnam, "Meaning and Reference," *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973), 699–711.
- 22 In precisely this context Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 116, writes: "... [Aquinas] resists saying that the causal connection itself could explain why we apprehend one particular and not another. He wants something internal to the perceiver that fixes the content of the cognition."
- 23 Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 113–16.
- 24 Anthony Kenny (personal communication) is not so sure that *haecceitas* is a form, and it is true that Scotus avoids the language of form when discussing his views on individuation in his early works. However, in his later and presumably more mature works, like the *Ordinatio*, he quite unambiguously adopts the language of form when presenting his views on individuation. See Timothy Noone, "Universals and Individuation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, Williams, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 25 He writes: "... an intuitive cognition is a proper cognition of a singular thing not because of its greater likeness to the one thing than to the other, but because it is naturally caused by the one thing and not by the other, and is not able to be caused by the other." William Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions*, Freddoso & Kelly, trans. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991), 66.
- 26 Searle, *Intentionality*, 241.
- 27 Searle, "Response: Reference and Intentionality," 237.
- 28 This paragraph is a summary of key points from Searle's essay "Literal Meaning," found in his *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
- 29 Searle, *Intentionality*, 253.

- 30 Searle, *Intentionality*, 253.
- 31 Searle, *Intentionality*, 125.
- 32 Searle, *Intentionality*, 125.
- 33 Searle, *Intentionality*, 123.
- 34 A. P. Martinich seems to agree with this point. He argues that Searle's position does justice to the best points of both the classic descriptive theory and the causal theory without falling prey to the errors of either. See his "John R. Searle," in *A Companion to Analytic Philosophy*, Martinich & Sosa, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 437.
- 35 As John Fotion has pointed out, there are already many hundreds of items listed in *The Philosopher's Index* on Searle, and most of these "attempt to use Searle for target practice." See his *John Searle* (Teddington: Acumen; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7. Responding to these criticisms appropriately is well beyond the scope of this chapter. But the fact that it is usually taken for granted that Putnam's twin-earth arguments have established the truth of externalism efforts may give some pause. However, I am inclined to think that (a) Searle is right that analytic philosophers often bring dubious commitments in the philosophy of mind into the philosophy of language, corrupting the latter with the mistakes of the former, and (b) that Searle's views in the philosophy of language attract undue criticism on account of his alleged dualism in the philosophy of mind. McDowell's exploration of the Cartesian roots of the assumptions behind the modern debate between externalists and internalists provides some independent support for (a). See John McDowell, "Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space," in *Subject, Thought and Context*, Pettit & McDowell, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). Michael Devitt's work, "Meanings Just Ain't in the Head," in *Method, Reason and Language: Essays in Honour of Hilary Putnam*, George Boolos, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 79–104, is a good instance of (b).
- 36 Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 350–64.
- 37 For a good discussion of this argument, and Scotus's vain attempts to improve upon it, see Richard Cross, "Philosophy of Mind," in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, Williams, ed.
- 38 Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 114.
- 39 Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 114.
- 40 Those who think it anachronistic to describe Aquinas as a "metaphysical realist" should consider his *Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics*, I, lect. 1., nn 1–3, where he discusses the four types of order and their relationship to reason. The important lines are as follows: "There is one sort of order which reason does not produce but only observes; this is the orderly relation of things in nature It is the province of natural philosophy to think of the order in things, which reason observes but does not make." Found in Vernon Bourke, *The Pocket Aquinas* (New York, N.Y.: Pocket Books, 1960), 184–85. One might also consult M. F. Burnyeat, "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed," in *Idealism Past and Present*. Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series 13, Godfrey Vesey, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 19–50.
- 41 Just what a "default position" is, is not entirely clear. One obvious interpretation would be that default positions are particularly well-entrenched beliefs that one is not likely to give up easily. But since Searle is reluctant to call metaphysical realism an hypothesis or an opinion, or a view of any sort it might be better to say that Searle takes us to be naturally disposed to behave as though metaphysical realism were true without our

- having to consciously entertain it as truth. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 10.
- 42 Searle, *Mind, Language*, 10.
- 43 Searle, *Intentionality*, 231.
- 44 See my “Metaphysical Realism as a Pre-Condition of Visual Perception,” *Biology and Philosophy* 19 (2004), 243–61.
- 45 In an interview reprinted in *What Philosophers Think*, Searle says “... it seems to me obviously false to say that the real world exists because we think of it or because we construct it.” *What Philosophers Think*, J. Baggini & J. Stangroom, eds. (London: Continuum, 2003), 185.
- 46 Pasnau, “Cognition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, Williams, ed., 285.
- 47 Baggini, *What Philosophers Think*, 285.
- 48 John Haldane, “The Forms of Thought,” in *The Philosophy of Roderick Chisholm*, L. E. Hahn ed., Library of Living Philosophers, vol. 25 (Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, 1997), 167.
- 49 See Marie-Dominique Chénu, *La Théologie comme science au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1957).
- 50 I would like to thank Anthony Kenny and Robert Pasnau for their valuable comments on an early draft of this chapter.

Chapter Five

Casual Relations: a Thomistic Account

Gabriele De Anna

1. Introduction

Aquinas's theory of causation plays a central role in most of his philosophical views, including some which have recently attracted the interest of contemporary philosophers working in the analytical tradition. Aquinas's theory of causation is fundamental to his account of the relation between mind and world, both in cognition and in human action.

Aquinas's notion of formal causation was revived, for example, by John Haldane¹ and by Jonathan Jacobs and John Zeis² in order to suggest that Aquinas's theory of cognition can solve some puzzling problems in contemporary philosophy of mind and epistemology – if we admit that there are relations of formal causation between world and mind, we can explain how the referents of mental contents are fixed in ways which overcome the problems of causal deviance normally involved in current accounts of mental representation.³

Such are the advantages of this approach to formal causation in the areas of cognition and human action, that Hilary Putnam accepted Haldane's proposal about cognition and subsequently about causation. Haldane's version of Thomistic causation accepted by Putnam involves the idea that Aquinas's (and Aristotle's) four causes are genuine causes since they are possible answers to explanatory demands about a certain event. But they do not constitute a complete set, being only the first members of a possibly endless list of acceptable explanations.⁴

The above examples of contemporary interest in Aquinas's notion of formal causation are meant to illustrate the point that attempts to introduce Aquinas's philosophical views into the arena of contemporary philosophical debates need to pay careful attention to his notion of causation. Causation, however, is a very contentious subject within analytical philosophy and current discussions have generated a number of highly sophisticated views on the matter. In the light of these views, Aquinas's claims about causation will undoubtedly raise several important matters. If Aquinas's account of causation is to be employed in current discussions then these issues need to be properly addressed. This chapter intends to offer a contribution towards the development of a Thomistic theory of causation, one that might vie as a respectable contender in contemporary debates.

My purpose in writing this chapter is not historical, for the view I will try to develop, strictly speaking, is not Aquinas's. I believe, however, that it is Thomistic

in the broader sense that it flows from Aquinas's claims about causation and is, I think, consistent with his overall philosophical and theological views.

The word "causation" is equivocal in Aquinas's usages. It might refer to the relations between substances in the natural order or to the relation between Creator and creatures via the giving of *actus essendi*. Cornelio Fabro named them, respectively, horizontal and vertical causation and studied the relations between them.⁵ Although I am aware of this distinction, here I will only deal with horizontal causation since it is the aspect with more relevance to current discussions. It seems to me, however, that what I say is not inconsistent with an explanation of the relations between the two distinct sorts of causation and, eventually, it might help to clarify our understanding of vertical causation as well.

An acceptable theory of causation needs to include two main items: (1) an explanation of what causal relations are and (2) an explanation of what sorts of things (objects, substances, events, facts, and so on) can be linked by a causal relation and thus count as causal *relata* (that is, what sorts of things can be causes and effects). The two explanations are normally entangled in the sense that what one says about one issue affects what one can (or should) say about the other. For reasons of space, I will only address the issue of what causal relations are even if I will do that with a particular view about causal *relata* already in my mind, a view which will briefly emerge toward the end of the chapter.

In the second section, I will suggest that Aquinas intended causal relations to be conditional relations, and I will show, in the light of contemporary elaborations, what an acceptable conditional analysis of causation requires. I will focus on Mackie's conditional analysis of causation, according to which causes are at least *INUS* conditions. In the third section, I will sketch Aquinas's account of the "modes" of causation. In the fourth section, I will claim that Aquinas's account of the modes of causation gives us the resources to claim that, within Thomistic philosophy, causal relations can be taken to be at least *INUS* conditions. I will briefly conclude with some remarks about what makes the traditional four causes special in respect to other *INUS* conditions.

2. Aquinas and the Conditional Analysis of Causation

Aquinas did not make a lot of claims about the nature and features of causal relations, but, while analyzing the modes of causation, he did say a few things, which, as we shall see in later sections, are relevant to the development of an account of causal relations. In at least at one point, however, he did make a clear, direct claim about causal relations. In his *ST* I, q. 44, a. 1, ad 2, he wrote that causation is a relation in which "... the effect would not exist, if the cause did not".⁶ This claim might seem surprising, especially in face of the fact that the very same claim was made, a few centuries later, by David Hume. This seems surprising, since, quite rightly, Aquinas and Hume are generally taken as paradigms of opposite philosophical views: direct realist the former, skeptic the latter. This convergence, though, might be useful for our purposes, for Hume's claims about

causal relations have been much rehearsed by subsequent philosophers and were developed into what is now called “conditional analysis of causation”. A Thomistic account of causation needs to consider these claims.

Before looking further into Aquinas’s theory of causation, then, we should say something about the problems of conditional analyses and discuss some recent debates. The intent is not that of comparing or contrasting Aquinas’s views with contemporary theories, but rather, to consider whether a satisfying conditional analysis of causation (an analysis of causation of the sort which Aquinas and Hume seem to be after) can be offered. If this can be done, and if Aquinas’s theory of causation is to be presented as an option in contemporary debates, we will need to consider whether Aquinas’s proposals are compatible with the requirements of a satisfactory contemporary view. Roughly, Aquinas and Hume mean this:

$$(1) \neg c \rightarrow \neg e$$

Here, c stands for a cause and e for an effect. (1) needs to be refined since it is certainly inadequate as it stands: it may be the case that e could have occurred even if c had not, because e could have been caused by an alternative cause c^* . For example, let us imagine that a house is burning because of the breaking of a stove. Even if the stove had not broken the house might nevertheless have ended up on fire because a candle fell on the floor. Let us imagine that the candle could have fallen exactly on the spot where some fire had spread from the broken stove so that the resulting burnings are identical in the two cases: from the moment of ignition on they burn the same.⁷ The best attempt to offer a conditional analysis of causation which also deals with counterexamples of this sort, is probably the account given by John Mackie in his “Causes and Conditions”.⁸

Mackie noted that even if a cause may not be a necessary condition of an effect (the effect could have been caused by some other cause), it must be a necessary part of a conjunction of conditions which are, as a whole, sufficient for it. In the above example, the burning stove is necessary, together with the presence of oxygen in the air, the availability of surrounding combustible material, and so on. All these conditions are jointly sufficient for the effect, although they may not be jointly necessary. Indeed, some other conjunction of necessary conditions could have been sufficient for the same effect (for example, the falling of a candle, together with the presence of oxygen, the availability of combustible material, and so on). The conjunctions of conditions which are sufficient for the effect are not composed of positive conditions only, as in the above examples, but they also contain negative conditions. For example, a negative condition could be that there are no water sprinklers which could prevent the spreading of the fire. It is also necessary that other possible concurring causes (like the falling of the candle, when the stove is the cause of the fire) have no causal role, otherwise there would be the problem of the overdetermination of causation.⁹ Conditions which are redundant or make no difference should not be part of a conjunction of conditions which is sufficient for the effect. When all these requirements are satisfied, the conjunction of conditions which is sufficient for the effect can be called a *minimal sufficient condition*.¹⁰

As mentioned, a minimal sufficient condition may not be necessary for the occurrence of the effect. For each occurring event there could be a (possibly infinite) set of minimal sufficient conditions, each of which is a conjunction of (possibly infinite) necessary conjuncts; the disjunction of all minimal sufficient conditions would be necessary for the effect:

$$(2) (c1 \& c2 \& \dots \neg c3 \& c4 \& \dots \neg c1^* \dots) \vee (c1^* \& c2^* \& \dots \neg c3 \& c4 \& \dots \neg c1) \vee \dots \leftrightarrow e$$

According to Mackie, each of the conditions cn may be a cause. A cause, therefore, may be an *insufficient* but *necessary* part of a condition which is *unnecessary* but *sufficient*, or, in other words, a cause may be an *INUS* condition. He uses the following notation. Let A be the cause of P , and X a conjunction of conditions such that the conjunction AX is a minimal sufficient condition of P (for example, $(c1 \& c2 \& \dots \neg c3 \& c4 \& \dots \neg c1^* \dots)$ in (2)). Let also Y be the disjunction of all the other minimal conditions, other than AX , which are sufficient for P . It may be the case that AX is the only minimal sufficient condition of P , or even that A itself is the only minimal sufficient condition. In the former case, A would be a necessary condition, and in the latter a *necessary and sufficient* condition of P . This is why Mackie claims that a cause is *at least* an *INUS* condition of the effect: it could be a necessary condition (when there are no other alternative causes of the effect) or a necessary and sufficient condition (when there are no other alternative causes *and* it causes the effect without the need that other conditions obtain), but, even if there are other possible causes and other favorable conditions are needed, it is an *INUS* condition. Therefore, “A caused P” means at least, or also,¹¹ that:

- (i) A is at least an *INUS* condition of P – that is, there is a necessary and sufficient condition of P which has one of these forms: $(AX \text{ or } Y)$, $(A \text{ or } Y)$, AX , A .
- (ii) A was present in the occasion in question.
- (iii) The factors represented by the “X,” if any, in the formula for the necessary and sufficient condition were present on the occasion in question.
- (iv) Every disjunct in “Y” which does not contain “A” as a conjunct was absent on the occasion in question.¹²

Mackie adds a refinement. What makes A a *cause* and differentiates it from all the other conditions included in X (the other conjuncts of the minimal sufficient condition of which A is also a part)? His answer involves the notion of a *causal field*.¹³ He does not define this, but elucidates it through some examples. One of these concerns the question “What caused this man’s skin cancer?” which may mean at least two different things. It may mean “Why did this man develop skin cancer now when he did not develop it before?” or “Why did this man develop skin cancer, whereas other men who were also exposed to radiation did not?” In the first case, the causal field is “the career of this man: it is within this that we are seeking a difference between the time when the skin cancer developed and times when it did

not”.¹⁴ In the second case, “the causal field is the class of men thus exposed to radiation and what is the cause in relation to one field, may not be the cause in relation to the other”.¹⁵ It seems that which reading one intends, and consequently what is the cause, depends on the context. The causal field, therefore, seems to be the region of reality which the context determines as causal (that is, as valuable options to replace *A*), as opposed as merely (at least *INUS*) conditional. Mackie suggests a consequent readjustment of (i):

(ia) *A* is at least an *INUS* condition of *P* in the field *F* – that is, there is a condition which, given the presence of whatever features characterize *F* throughout, is necessary and sufficient for *P*, and which is one of the forms: (*AX* or *Y*), (*A* or *Y*), *AX*, *A*.¹⁶

Because of the role of the causal field in (ia), causation is an epistemic notion, that is, it concerns the way in which our knowledge is built and obtained, and it entails the idea that it is a sort of (or somehow dependent on) explanation. The interesting thing about Mackie’s proposal is that it offers, through the idea that any effect is sufficiently and necessarily dependent on a disjunction of sufficient conjunctions of *INUS* conditions, a conditional analysis of what happens at the metaphysical level, but then it leaves it open to our epistemic standpoint and to the context (our interests, desires and needs) to decide which of the *INUS* conditions within each minimal sufficient condition are causes.

A problem with Mackie’s proposal, however, is that no matter how precisely we specify the causal field, there is always the possibility that there are *INUS* conditions which cannot qualify as causes. For example, there could be an entity (fact, event, property or whatever) *o1* which necessarily coexists with another entity (fact, event, property or whatever) *o2* because *o1* supervenes on *o2*; if *o2* satisfies (2) as one of the *cns*, so does *o1*, since they necessarily coexist. Thus, they are both *INUS* conditions of the effect. But it may be the case that *o1* fails to have any causal role, whatever the causal field may be. This is the reason why, while introducing (ia)–(iv), it was said that those conditions specify what an *INUS* condition *at least* (or *also*) is: they explain only *part of the meaning* of “*A* caused *P*,” since there is more to causation than what they mention.

Note that this entails that there are two *at least*-restrictions on *INUS* conditions which are causes. First, a cause is *at least* an *INUS* condition in the sense that it may even be a necessary or necessary and sufficient condition of the effect. Second, a cause is *at least* a condition which is at least *INUS*, since the meaning of “*A* caused *B*” is only partially captured by (ia)–(iv). In other words, being a cause is being a condition which is at least *INUS* plus something else. For brevity, we can say that a cause is *also an at least INUS condition*, where “also” fulfils the role of the second *at least* restriction, and “at least” fulfils the role of the first *at least* restriction. Thus we can say that a cause is *at least an INUS condition*, since it could be a necessary or necessary and sufficient condition, and that it is *also* at least an *INUS* condition, since it is something more than that, given the fact that there may be conditions which are at least *INUS* but fail to be causes, whatever is the causal field.

In conclusion, it seems that a satisfying conditional analysis of causation must be consistent with the idea that causes are at least *INUS* conditions *and* possibly should have the resources to explain the constraints of the causal field, that is, to mark the difference between causes and other non-causal at least *INUS* conditions, in order to explain what a cause is also (besides being at least an *INUS* condition). Since Aquinas seems to favor a conditional analysis of causation when he suggests a reading of causal relations like (1), and since Mackie's analysis offers a deep and detailed account of causation in conditional terms, Aquinas's theory is plausible and acceptable to the extent that it is capable of satisfying Mackie's requirements and, possibly, also offering a criterion to differentiate causes from other non-causal at least *INUS* conditions. In what follows, a key interpretation of Aquinas's views will be suggested that highlights how it could meet these requisites.¹⁷

3. The Modes of Causation

Right after defining the four groups (or species) of causes (efficient, material, formal and final), Aristotle goes on to say more about the ways (or modes) in which something may be a cause and Aquinas develops these explanations in his own ways.¹⁸ Aquinas's account of the modes of causation is, I think, relevant to an attempt to construct a conditional analysis of causal relation and therefore we need to turn and consider it.

According to a first distinction, "among causes of the same species, some are prior and some are posterior".¹⁹ A modern reader would easily understand this as a distinction depending on the order in causal chains. Aristotle's examples, though, are disappointing: health has a *doctor* as a proximate cause, and a *man of skill*, the concept of which is the genus of the concept *doctor*, as a remote cause. According to a second example, the double is a proximate cause of an octave, and number is a remote one, since the concept *number* is the genus of the concept *double*.

Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle is reassuring: between *In Meta.* and *In Phys. expo.* he offers four readings of the prior/posterior distinction. The first two readings are suggested in *In Phys. expo.*, where he notes that Aristotle's distinction can be taken either in the sense that there is a share of predication (*communitatem predicationis*) between prior and posterior cause, or in the sense that there is a share of causal power (*communitatem causalitatis*) between them.²⁰ Aristotle's example fits in the first case whereas the second case accommodates Aquinas's views on the hierarchical structure of the world. Let us begin with the latter.

According to Aquinas, forms are hierarchically structured according to the degree of their independence from matter. The less constrained by matter something is, the more effectively it can act on different things of different sorts and thus is viewed as being of a higher priority in the order of causality.²¹ This latter prior/posterior distinction (*communitatem causalitatis*), since it involves a hierarchical outlook on reality, seems to be related to the problem of vertical causation and so (as explained in the introduction) can be side-stepped for our purposes. Furthermore, it is hard to see what Aquinas means by it and how it could

be supported. The former interpretation of the prior/posterior distinction (*communitatem predicationis*), although quite problematic, is of interest and needs to be examined.

Let us suppose that Joe healed Bill. Joe is a doctor. He is also a professional man. Thus, according to Aquinas, both a doctor and a professional man are causes of Bill's recovery. The concept *professional man* is a higher-level concept than the concept *doctor*. All doctors are professional men, but not all professional men are doctors, since there are lawyers, accountants, and so on. When Aquinas says that a doctor is a cause of a recovery, by "doctor" he may refer to one of three things: (a) to an individual who falls under the concept doctor; (b) to the individual essence (or form) of an accident such as an instantiation of a quality which belongs to a particular individual: in this case it would be the *doctorness* of Joe (just as one might think of the individualized case of whiteness which is the whiteness of this page); (c) to the concept *doctor*. It is improbable that Aquinas meant (a), since according to (a) there would be an only cause, that is, the individual falling under both concepts, but Aquinas says that there are two causes, a prior one and a posterior one.²² A similar problem arises in the case of (b). The form of an accident is the principle of organization because of which an individual has a quality which makes it fall under a certain concept: the structuring principle because of which an individual may be said to be a doctor, though, is the same one due to which that individual may fall under both concepts *doctor* and *professional man* – again, the cause would be one (the structuring principle), but Aquinas is referring to *two different causes*. (c) is the only option left. How concepts may be prior to each other can probably be explained through the canonical definition of the species–genus relation: a definition of a species is constituted by the definition of the higher-level genus plus a term referring to a differentiating characteristic. Then, Aquinas needs only to show that a concept can figure as one of the causes in the first member of (2), that is, that it may be an (at least) *INUS* condition, and (c) offers a plausible reading of the prior/posterior distinction.

The third and the fourth readings of Aristotle's distinction between prior and posterior causes are presented in Aquinas's *In Meta*. The third one is a variant of the first: as a higher-level universal is a cause prior to a lower-level one, any universal is a cause prior to an individual which instantiates it.

In the last reading of the distinction, Aquinas interprets Aristotle in a way a modern reader would find more natural:

causes are prior or subsequent [...] when there are many distinct causes which are related to each other, one of which is primary and remote, and the another secondary and proximate (as in the case of efficient causes man generates man as a proximate and subsequent cause, but the sun as a prior and remote cause).²³

In this passage, Aquinas is clearly thinking about a causal chain and claims that *c1* is prior to *c2* if and only if *c2* is closer than *c1* to the effect in the causal process.

The second distinction between modes of causation introduced by Aristotle is between proper (*per se*) and accidental causes (*per accidens*):

Polycletus is an accidental cause of a statue, while the sculptor is a per se cause. For Polycletus is a cause of statue insofar as he happens to be a sculptor.²⁴

It is important to note that this distinction does not correspond to the distinction between substances and accidents. In the example, “Polycletus” is a better candidate than “sculptor” to refer to the substance, that is, the individual man. Being a sculptor, after all, is just an accident and not an essential characteristic for a man. The reason a cause is accidental is due to its role in the causal process; the existence of a statue depends essentially on the existence of an individual who sculpted it, but it is not essential who that individual was. Even if Polycletus had not existed, the statue could have nonetheless existed, since somebody else could have sculpted it.²⁵

The prior/posterior distinction also applies to accidental causes. Aquinas gives an example which fits in with the first and third readings of that distinction where the species and the genera to which an accidental cause belongs are also accidental causes. For example, since Polycletus is an accidental cause of the statue, and he is a human and an animal, humanity and animality will also be accidental causes of the statue.²⁶ It can be suggested, though, that accidental causes can be prior and posterior also in the fourth sense: if Polycletus is an accidental cause of the statue, so is his father; the father, though, is a prior accidental cause because he is further away from the effect in the causal chain.

Aquinas introduces a further distinction between accidental causes: “some [...] are proximate and some remote”.²⁷ He refers back to a parallelism with proximity and remoteness of proper causes, but it is not clear what he is thinking about. A possibility would be that he has in his mind the prior/posterior distinction in the order of causal series, that is, the point which has just been made at the end of the previous paragraph. In that case, though, it is not clear why he introduces this distinction right after discussing the prior/posterior distinction. Furthermore, the intelligibility of this distinction is complicated by the fact that he explains it quite differently in *In Meta.* and in *In Phys. expo.* In *Meta.* he seems to say that accidental causes which are substances are more proximate than accidental causes which are accidents:

Polycletus is a more proximate cause of a statue than what is white or what is musical [being accidental causes]. For an accidental mode of predication is more remote when an accident is predicated of an accident than when an accident is predicated of a subject. For one accident is predicated of another only because both are predicated of a subject. Hence something pertaining to an accident is predicated of another, as something pertaining to a builder is predicated to a musician, this mode of predication is more remote than one in which something is predicated of the subject of an accident, as when something pertaining to a builder is predicated of Polycletus.²⁸

A parallel criterion, suggested in *In Phys. expo.* seems to be quite different, since it concerns the mutual relation between accidental causes which happen to be accidents, rather than their inherence in an accidental cause which is a substance:

if it happens that the person who sculpted a statue is white and musical, the musical is a more proximate cause, since musicality and the skill to sculpt are in the same subject and because of the same thing, namely the soul; whiteness, instead, is because of the body.²⁹

In conclusion, it is hard to see what this distinction amounts to and how it is different from more familiar cases of priority-difference among accidental causes.

Concerning accidental causes, Aquinas also notes that there are two ways in which a cause may be said to be accidental – from the viewpoint of the cause and from that of the effect:

from the view-point of the cause, because whatever is accidental to a cause is itself called an accidental cause, for example when we say that something white is the cause of the house. In another way from the view-point of the effect, i.e., inasmuch as a thing is said to be an accidental cause of something else because it is accidental to the proper effect.³⁰

In the first case, the accidental cause is just a characteristic of whatever the proper cause is; a feature which the proper cause happens to have, but which has no direct causal role. For example, the white man may be the cause of the house, but not *qua* white, only *qua* builder. Whiteness as such is not directly responsible for the effect, even though it is a condition of it, since the builder needs to be colored in some way, and without any color there could not be any builder. Calling these causes indirect may be justified by the fact that they are causes of the causes of the effect.

From the viewpoint of the effect, there are causes which are not essential, that is, are accidental but still have some direct role to play in the production of the effect. They do not contribute by causing one of the causes of the effect (as in the previous case) but they are required in order to set the conditions which make the actual causing possible. According to Aquinas, causes can be accidental from the viewpoint of the effect in three different ways: (a) “the thing has a necessary connection with the effect. Thus that which removes an obstacle is said to be a mover accidentally.” Aquinas seems to be referring to an *INUS* condition of the effect, which lacks some characteristic to be a proper cause, for example, the absence of water sprinklers in the example of the fire mentioned in the previous section would be accidental in this sense. (b) “Something is accidental to the proper effect when the accident is connected with the effect neither necessarily nor in the majority of cases but seldom. [...] It is in this way that fortune and chance are said to be accidental causes.” For example, the fact that I go to the market may be the cause of my meeting a friend whom I did not expect to be there; neither all trips to the market nor the majority of them may have such unexpected results, but in that circumstance it happened. This is the sense in which we may say that an event was caused, but totally accidentally, that is, non-intentionally. (c) “In a third way things are accidental to the effect when they have no connection except perhaps in the mind, as when someone says that he is the cause of an earthquake because an earthquake took place when he entered the house.”³¹ In this case the relation between alleged cause and effect can only be *post quem*, due to someone’s mistakenly taking the truth of both the sentences describing the cause and that

describing the effect as a mark of the two events being causally related.

(c) seems just to mean that in a sense “accidental cause” may be used to refer to events which are claimed to have a causal role but which in fact do not. On the other hand, *prima facie*, (b) may seem obscure; however, it could be reduced to (a), as it will be clear after the discussion of necessity in the next section. Chance, according to Aquinas and Aristotle, is not metaphysically robust because it is just the production of an effect which was not intended by an agent, either because of the interference of some unexpected or unconsidered factor or because the effect did not result according to the normal development of natural things. In reality, fortune is not a cause at all. (a), finally, seems to be the real explanation of what accidental causes from the viewpoint of the effect are: *they have a direct and active role in producing the effect but they lack a kind of essentiality which belongs to a proper cause*. A full explanation of this requires a treatment of causal *relata*, but for now I just suggest that proper causes are those which give the effect its form, its matter, its end, and which act efficiently in producing it.

The third distinction of modes of causation suggested by Aristotle is between simple and composite causes. Aquinas explains:

a cause is said to be simple when, for example, in the case of a statue, the proper cause alone is considered, as a sculptor, or when an accidental cause alone is considered, as Polycletus. But a cause is composite when both are taken together, for example, when we say that the cause of a statue is the sculptor Polycletus.³²

This can be understood as the claim that different degrees of completeness are possible, according to the number of *INUS* conditions constituting a minimal sufficient condition which are specified. Aquinas warns us not to confuse this Aristotelian distinction between complete and simple causes, with another one, namely, the distinction between partial and complete causes:

there is moreover another way in which causes are said to be composite, that is, when several causes act together to produce one effect, for example, when many men act together in order to row a boat, or when many stones combine in order to constitute the matter of a house. But [Aristotle] omits the latter way because no one of these things taken in itself is the cause, but a part of a cause.³³

It must be noted that Aquinas is imprecise, since he first speaks of “several causes acting together” and then denies that they are causes since each of them is just “a part of cause”. This detail aside, though, this passage is important for two reasons. First, Aquinas appears to be aware of the distinction between partial and complete causes, which is something missing from Aristotle. Second, he gives a plausible interpretation of Aristotle, according to which his discussion of modes concerns only complete causes.

The fourth and last distinction between modes of causation introduced by Aristotle is between potential and actual causes and effects. A builder, for example, is an actual cause of a house only insofar as he is actually building one, otherwise he is just a potential cause. A builder who is not building but may do so potentially,

though, is not just a non-builder, since potency, as Aquinas says, “designates his habit or office,” that is, his skill.³⁴ In other words, a builder who is not building is not just like a man who does not have the skill to build: he has the actuality of that skill even though its utilization is only potential. These two modes of causality, potentiality and actuality, apply to all the other three pairs: prior/posterior, proper/accidental and simple/composite.

A last remark about the modes of causation is that they hold both for causes and for their effects. Aquinas comments:

for effects, whether particular or universal, can be divided into prior or subsequent, as a sculptor may be called the cause of this statue, which is subsequent; or of statue which is more universal and prior; or of an image, which is still more universal. And similarly, something is the causal form of this particular bronze; or of bronze, which is more universal; or of matter which is still more universal. The same thing may be said of accidental effects, that is, of things produced by accident. For a sculptor who is the cause of the statue is also the cause of the heaviness, whiteness or redness which are in it as accidents from the matter and are not caused by this agent.³⁵

The claims made about universals being effects may seem implausible. One can reasonably accept that they may be causes, for example, they may figure as conditions of a specified kind for the existence of objects. But it is difficult to see how a universal can be brought into existence. Maybe because an instance of it comes into existence? If so, how can the *universal* be such? Maybe Aquinas would answer positively to the first question and, in order to meet the second one, would bring into the picture his thesis of *universalia post rem*. According to Aquinas, universals are structuring principles or patterns of organization which only exist, *qua universals*, in the mind after being abstracted from the things which they structure. Different instances of one and the same pattern may exist in different things, and thus that pattern is universal, but it can exist separately as a universal only in a mind which abstracted it. Given this view, Aquinas can plausibly hold that if an object is an effect, the universal of which its structure is an instance, is also an effect, for two reasons. Firstly, the instantiation of that universal structuring a certain object is caused with the object. Secondly, the presence of that universal in a mind is caused by the abstractive process and, ultimately, by the objects from which it is abstracted. (cf. Figure 5.1 for a recapitulation of the modes of causation).

I would like to suggest that Aquinas's distinction among several modes of causation offers the possibility to systemize the features of causation for which Mackie introduced the notion of causal field. In fact, the context and the question which one wants to answer determines what kind of cause something is (that is, in what modality it is a cause).

In order to be divided as prior or posterior, in the first place, causes have to be distinguished from other background conditions and this depends also on the explanatory context. When I ask “Who made that statue?”, for example, I am already constraining my inquiry on the conditions which made the creation of that statue possible in general, that is, to the person who sculpted it. The causal field is thus limited to a sculptor (prior cause), and to things which caused him (his

		MODES OF CAUSATION						
CAUSES (efficient, final, material, formal)	EFFECTS	prior vs posterior		per se vs accidental		simple vs composite	complete vs incomplete	potential vs actual
		hierarchy	univ.-individ.	causal chain	View-point of the cause			

Figure 5.1

humanity, his parents, and so on: posterior causes); whereas several other conditions which had to obtain in order for the statue to be created (for example, some man had to quarry a piece of marble and some other to carry it to the art studio) become just part of the explanatory background.

What counts as an accidental cause and what counts as a *per se* cause also depends on the explanatory context. The event of a statue having been created, for example, may raise the issue concerning why it was a statue *qua* statue which was created (and not a table), and thus the creator being a sculptor (and not a carpenter) is a *per se* cause. The fact that the sculptor was a man, in that case, is merely accidental. On the other hand, had the question concerned the fact that the statue was a work of art, and not, say, a carving produced by sand carried by the wind, then the fact that it was created by a man, that is, an intentional agent, would have been a *per se* cause, and the fact that that man was white would be accidental.

Similarly, whether a cause is composite or simple depends on what answer one expects to one’s question. When one asks “Who made this statue?” one may be satisfied to know that a sculptor did and thus a sculptor would be a simple cause. The answer “The sculptor Polycletus made it” would add some accidental cause as a further specification and thus it would be a composite cause. (The circumstances in which the answer “A sculptor made it” could be acceptable do not need to be particularly queer. One may wonder, at an exhibition, whether some piece of art is the result of the work of an intentional agent or whether it is stone carved by the wind and placed on a platform.) Alternatively, if the question is asked by the head teacher of a fine arts school, who wants to know from the sculpting teacher the name and area of specialization of a student, “The sculptor Polycletus made it” could offer a simple cause as an answer, whereas “The sculptor Polycletus from Athens” would add some accidental specification and would thus mention a composite cause.

What counts as a complete cause rather than an incomplete cause also depends on the explanatory context. “Why is that boat proceeding at that speed?” may be asked by the manager of a rowing team as the boat to which he is referring is

coming in second at a boat race. A *complete* answer, that is, an answer which may help his team win next time, should probably involve considerations of hydrodynamics, naval architecture, strength of the crew, and so on. The strength of the crew would then be an incomplete cause, which would make an unsatisfying answer to him. On the other hand, if the question is raised by the coach of a rowing team, while comparing different crews available to him, the crew can be a complete cause, since the shape of the boat and the features of the stream of water are constant and become background conditions.

Finally, what is potentially or actually a cause is context-dependent. A statue which is about to be sculpted can actually come into existence only if several potentialities are available. For example, there needs to be a person who knows how to sculpt, a person who knows how to quarry marble and another who can drive the piece of marble to the studio. What will be a proper cause, however, rather than a mere background condition, will depend on the context.

4. Causal Relations

As we have seen, Aquinas suggests that causal relations should be analyzed conditionally when he claimed that they have the form:

$$(1) \neg c \rightarrow \neg e$$

On the other hand, we have seen that a satisfying conditional analysis of causation should take the form of:

$$(2) (c1 \& c2 \& \dots \neg c3 \& c4 \& \dots \neg c1^* \dots) \vee (c1^* \& c2^* \& \dots \neg c3 \& c4 \& \dots \neg c1) \vee \dots \leftrightarrow e$$

and should subsequently be developed along the lines suggested by Mackie. We should now consider whether Aquinas says anything that suggests (or is at least consistent with) a conditional analysis satisfying modern standards.

As we have seen, (2) takes causes to be at least necessary members of conjunctions of conditions which are minimally sufficient for the occurrence of an effect. For each effect, such members may be infinite in number since there may be infinite possible events which, if actual, would be *INUS* conditions of the resulting effect. A sufficient condition is needed in order to account for the possibility of the existence (or non-existence) of each of them. There is a crucial passage in Aristotle's *Physics* which Aquinas endorses (adding some examples, and a further distinction not important for our purposes). Aristotle starts his discussion of luck (or fortune) and chance (that is, "the automatic", in Charlton's translation) as follows:

since we see some things always, and other for the most part, coming to be in the same way, it is plain that luck or its outcome is not called the cause of either of these – of that

which is of necessity and always, or that which is for the most part. But since there are other things which come to be besides these, and all men say that they are the outcome of luck, plainly there is such thing as luck or the automatic, [that is, by chance].³⁶

Here Aristotle distinguishes between three kinds of causal connection: (i) the initial conditions necessitate the effect: that “things come always to be in the same way” means that whenever certain conditions obtain some particular consequence will necessarily follow, that is, the initial conditions are sufficient for the effect; (ii) that things come to in the same way *for the most part* means that the obtaining of some initial condition makes the occurrence of a certain result probable, but not certain; (iii) some things come to be in ways which are made neither necessary nor probable by the initial conditions, that is, they happen by chance.

This analysis is problematic for the following reason. From (i), we can conclude that Aristotle must have been aware that there are complete conditions, that is, conjunctions of all causes that are fully sufficient for an effect (that is, at least a simplified version of (2), for example, one having an only disjunct as first member, must be true). This is a comforting result since it suggests that an analysis of causation like (2) is on the lines of what Aristotle and Aquinas tried to do. But then what should we think of (ii) and (iii)? If Aristotle takes the initial conditions to be completely spelled out also in these cases, then his claim is that on a metaphysical level there are three forms of causal relations and that in the case of two of them, that is, (ii) and (iii), causation is underdetermined. This would leave no room for the possibility of a conditional analysis of causation.

It seems to me, however, that the distinction between (i), (ii) and (iii) could be epistemological rather than metaphysical: in case (i), all causes are considered and so the resulting conjunct is a sufficient condition of the effect. In cases (ii) and (iii), on the contrary, only some of the causes are taken into account. (ii) is the claim that an effect is necessitated by *some* causes, *other things being equal*; but in the few cases in which other things are not equal, that is, some causally interfering unknown and unusual events occur, the effect could be deviant from normal cases, although fully determined. (iii) is just a radical version of (ii): *other things being equal*, a certain effect is not made probable, nor improbable by some initial conditions, but it can happen nonetheless. In either case, though, full knowledge of all causes would show the necessity of the effect. If this is right, then Aristotle’s theory is consistent with a conditional analysis of causation.

That this is the right interpretation of the passage may become clear if we consider it in the context of Aristotle’s explanation of fortune and chance. For our purposes, it will be interesting to see how Aquinas developed a similar interpretation of this point.

In this part of the second book of *Physics*, Aristotle is trying to square common sense talk about fortune and chance with the intuitions of many philosophers according to whom all happenings are necessarily determined by their causes:

necessarily, then, the causes from which an outcome of luck might come to be are indeterminate. That is why luck is thought to be an indeterminate sort of thing and

inscrutable to man, and at the same time there is a way in which it might be thought that nothing comes to be as the outcome of luck. For all these things are rightly said, as might be expected. There is a way in which things come to be as the outcome of luck: they come to be by virtue of accident, and luck is an accidental cause. But simply, it is the cause of nothing. And in the case of a house the cause is a builder, but by accident a flute-player [...].³⁷

Aristotle agrees with both sides of the dispute (“for all these things are rightly said”), but, of course, he needs to show that the inconsistency is only apparent. He grants that in a sense nothing happens by chance (“nothing comes to be as the outcome of luck”), and that chance is not really a cause (“is cause of nothing”). We say that it is by chance that the cause of the house is a flute-player, because the builder, who is the proper cause, happened to be a flute-player as well and so the flute-player is an accidental cause of the house. Now, since the accidental causes of an event are “indeterminate”³⁸ and thus may be “inscrutable to man”, there may be cases in which, *when the other things are not equal*, we do not know some accidental cause which made *other things unequal*, and is essential in determining the effect. Thus, even though the effect is fully determined by the conjunction of all the initial conditions, our knowledge may be inadequate in determining the proper causes of the thing to be explained. On a metaphysical level, the causation is determined. On an epistemological level, it may not be.

These claims are highly problematic. Every effect has infinite causes, some proper and some accidental, and so we can *never* have a full knowledge of all of them. How can we speak of fortune, that is, note our epistemic limits, only in some cases? The answer suggested in the previous paragraph is that this happens only if the “*other things being equal*” condition does not hold true. This, however, needs to be explained. Aristotle’s solution is grounded on teleology: some things, although not all, are for some end (have final causes). There are two classes of things of this kind: things made by humans with some intention and natural beings whose end is the full realization of their form through growth. In these cases, a process of change is directed toward the fulfillment of some end. When things are normal, that is, *other things being equal*, the end can be reached: the proper causes (material, efficient, formal and final) give a satisfying account of the reasons due to which a thing exists and changes. In some cases, though, the reaching of an end may be made impossible by something else. It is important to note that its final cause has already been determined, when the thing was created with an intention or informed by a principle of organization having a built-in teleology. In these cases the “*other things being equal*” condition does not hold anymore and the four usual causes are not enough to explain what happened. Sometimes, in these cases, we do not know what the interfering cause was and then we say that the effect was the result of chance.³⁹

An example, here, may be useful and Aquinas provides an interesting example, one that is open to a modern line of interpretation.⁴⁰ Let us imagine that a normal baby was born. In this case we could say that the parents were the *efficient cause*; the biological materials received from the mother constituting the *material cause*

and the genetical structure received by both parents constituting the *formal cause*. Because of this genetical structure, the baby has a particular form and is disposed to grow in certain ways: the fully realized form, that is, the grown individual, is the *final cause*. Let us now imagine another baby who was born with six fingers on one of his hands. He was caused exactly like the previous baby, under all the relevant respects; for example, he had a normal genetical structure. Consequently, he also had the same end. He was bound by his genes to grow in certain ways, in particular, with five fingers in both his hands. Yet, in his case, something went wrong, that is, some things were not equal. For example, some hormonal dysfunction caused an exaggerated cellular reproduction at a crucial point of his fetal development. This is a non-proper, accidental cause and it has to be adverted to if we wish to explain why things were different in this case. When we do not manage to do this, we appeal to “chance”.

In conclusion, Aristotle and Aquinas believed that any effect results from a conjunction of conditions which is as a whole sufficient for it. They believed that, on a metaphysical level, causes are always determined. This view is therefore consistent with a conditional analysis of causation.

Even if Aquinas believed that each effect is determined by a set of conditions which is sufficient for it, his views would not be consistent with (2) unless he also believed that it is possible that none of those sets is necessary for the obtaining of the effect. A mark of the fact that he could have held this view can be found in his discussion of the infinity of accidental causes: he claimed that there are infinite accidental causes of any effect since “an infinity of things may happen to one and the same”.⁴¹ This may be interpreted in at least in two ways: (a) as claiming that any one thing may undergo an infinite number of changes; (b) as claiming that any one thing may have the accidents it has (that is, be part of the events in which it is involved) through an infinite number of causes.

The latter interpretation would be consistent with (2): it claims that each of the sets of conditions sufficient for an effect may be unnecessary. A confirmation of the correctness of this interpretation can come from an example given by Aquinas:

per accidens causes are infinite, because it is possible for a man to go to a place because of an infinity of reasons; e.g., if he goes to visit someone, or to pursue an enemy, or to escape from a pursuer, or to see a show of some sort.⁴²

Here Aquinas is still discussing fortune and chance. What really matters, though, is that he seems to be admitting that for each effect there is a set of conditions which is sufficient for it but does not need to be necessary. There may be other (possibly an infinite number of) sets of conditions, each of which could have been sufficient but are not actual. In his example, the man could have gone to that place for many (possibly infinite) reasons under the assumption that all the other necessary requirements were satisfied.

We can now recapitulate Aquinas’s views on causal relations. He believed that a cause is in some relation of necessary and sufficient conditional dependence with an effect. He accepted, therefore, a conditional analysis of causation. However, he

was also aware of other truths about causation which could have led him towards a more sophisticated analysis, such as (2). These truths are the following. Firstly, he was aware that an effect is sufficiently conditioned by a conjunction of many, possibly infinite, causes. This is indicated by his discussion of the overdetermination of causation, by his distinction between complete and incomplete causes, and also by his admission of an infinite number of accidental and posterior causes. Secondly, his discussion of chance shows that he believed that each effect, on the metaphysical level, is sufficiently determined by a set of (infinite) causes, which is then a sufficient condition of the effect. Thirdly and last, he was aware of the possibility that an effect may be produced by one of many alternative sets of complete causes, each one of which is sufficient but not necessary for the occurrence of the effect. Thus, even if he never proposed a sophisticated analysis like (2), Aquinas was aware of all the reasons which may lead one to refine an analysis of causation like (1) along the lines of (2). Thus, we can conclude that what he thought about causes is not inconsistent with them being also at least *INUS* conditions of their effects.

Let us now consider whether the four Aristotelian-Thomistic causes can really be *INUS* conditions of their effects. We can consider the traditional example of a statue, which is convenient since it allows us to easily identify the four proper causes belonging to each of the four groups. The material cause of a statue is the marble stuff it is made of. The efficient cause is the sculptor. The formal cause is the mental image which was in the sculptor's mind. The final cause is his desire to increase the artistic beauty of his town.

If a certain sculptor, for example Michelangelo, had not sculpted a certain statue, someone else could have sculpted exactly that statue, even though Michelangelo's presence was necessary under the conditions which actually obtained and which were sufficient to cause the existence of that statue. Michelangelo is an *INUS* condition of that statue.⁴³

If the block of marble with which that statue was made had not been available, that statue could still have been made with other marble, but the fact is that that block of marble was a necessary (given all the other obtaining conditions) and sufficient (jointly with all the other obtaining conditions) condition for the existence of the statue. That block of marble, then, is an *INUS* condition of the statue.

If Michelangelo had not had exactly that mental image in his mind when he sculpted the statue, but a sufficiently similar one, he would have still sculpted that very statue; but the fact that he had exactly that form in his mind is a necessary (given the other circumstances) and sufficient (jointly with the other circumstances) condition for the existence of the statue, that is, it is one of its *INUS* conditions.

If Michelangelo had not desired to increase the beauty of his town, he could still have sculpted that statue, for example, because he wanted some money from a patron; but his desire to increase his town's beauty, given all the other circumstances, was a necessary part of a jointure of conditions which was sufficient for the production of the statue. Michelangelo's intentions, thus, were an *INUS* condition for the existence of the statue.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that a conditional analysis like (2) can coherently fit into the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of causation. Two problems, however, shed some doubts on this conclusion. First, as we saw above, Mackie's conditional analysis tells us what a necessary condition for something being a cause is: a cause is also at least an *INUS* condition. There are things which are not causes, though, and still satisfy (2); for example, they are properties supervening on actual causes or *INUS* conditions which one would not consider as causes in a given causal field. Second, if it is true that what Aquinas says about causal connections suggests an analysis similar to (2), should he not conclude that there is one and only one class of things which may be called causes, rather than four?

Solutions to these problems would require a detailed account of causal *relata*, and this, alas, cannot be done here. I would still like to outline a possible solution, though. The major contention about Aquinas's views on causal *relata* is that nowadays we would say that events, not substances, are causes and effects. However, if a follower of Aquinas manages to suggest that events are metaphysically dependent on substances, he can try to claim that substances and their *hylomorphic* constituents are also causes and effects.

An answer to the first problem could be that according to Aquinas *anything* which is an *INUS* condition may be considered a cause and that he does not share the common (at least nowadays) intuition according to which there are things which are *INUS* conditions but fail to have any causal relevance. Let us recall, in fact, that even the whiteness of a builder, according to Aquinas, can be considered a cause of a house, that is, an accidental cause. This example is interesting because it concerns a typical counterexample of (2), in contemporary discussions: the property *being colored*, a lot of people would say, is supervenient in things which may be causes and so it is an *INUS* condition when it supervenes on something which is such. If a golf club is involved in an event which is an *INUS* condition of hitting a ball, so too is the property *being colored*, since the club needs to be some color. Even the property of being white may be involved in an event which is an *INUS* condition, assuming that that club is white: the club could have been colored otherwise, but given the actual conditions (among which there are the following: the club is not brown, the club is not black, and so on), its being white is necessary. In other words, differences in the color of the club may generate different minimal sufficient conditions, but given a certain minimal sufficient condition, the color of the club is an *INUS* condition. The property of being white, we would say, has no relevant causal role in the hitting of the ball, for then we would have the problem of explaining what that relevant causal role would be. Aquinas, though, would grant that whiteness is a cause, but an accidental one, as opposed to a proper one. This seems a simple syntactic difference: he calls "cause" any *INUS* condition, and "proper cause" what we would call simply "cause". The problem remains: what is special about proper causes and differentiates them from accidental ones?

In introducing the accidental–proper distinction in section 2, a hint was suggested, but a full explanation postponed: proper causes are those which are directly responsible for the hylomorphic composition of a substance involved in the effect-event. Whatever the effect-event might be, it will consist in a substance

exhibiting some property, due to the reception of an accidental or substantial form. The received form, the receiving matter or substance, the activity of who- or whatever is responsible for the reception of that form, and the eventual end of the process (which might or might not be intentional), all contribute to the hylomorphic constitution of the event. They all are *INUS* conditions which explain the effect–event, unlike other *INUS* conditions.

A solution to the second problem may come from the fact that Aquinas uses the term “species” to refer to the four Aristotelian groups of causes. This suggests that he takes the concept cause to refer to a common genus, shared by the four groups. As is well known, different species belonging to the same genus share the same definition of the genus, but in each case a specific characterizing difference has to be added. So *being also an at least INUS condition* may be the common definition, and each species of cause will then be specified by further characteristics. If we take the above stand about causal *relata*, we can claim that the traditional four causes are those *INUS* conditions which explain the hylomorphic constitution of the substance involved in the effect–event. They are *INUS* conditional relations like others, but they are explanatorily prior to others.

5. Conclusion

Haldane’s claim – mentioned in the introduction above – that the four traditional causes are just the first members of a possibly endless list, can now, in one sense, be confirmed. Potentially infinite conditional relations fulfilling the at-least *INUS* requirement can hold between possibly infinite events (or event-constituents) and a certain effect. What these are is determined by the metaphysical structure of the world. However, some of these events or event-constituents have a particular role in explaining the effect–event and we call them causes. Our epistemic requirements may vary concerning what counts as an explanation and thus what counts as a cause. The traditional four causes, however, seem to maintain a certain explanatory priority: if it is true that reality is fundamentally *hylomorphically* structured, as a follower of Aquinas would contend, then the traditional causes are explanatorily fundamental, since they account for the hylomorphic structure of effect–events.⁴⁴

Notes

- 1 “Brentano’s Problem,” *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 32 (1989), 1–32; “Mind/World Identity Theory and the Anti-Realist Challenge,” in *Reality, Representation, Projection*, John Haldane and Crispin Wright, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); “Whose Theory? Which Representations?” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (1993), 247–57; “A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind,” *Ratio* 11 (1993), 253–76.
- 2 Jonathan Jacobs and John Zeis, “Form and Cognition: How to Go Out of Your Mind,” *Monist* 80 (1997), 539–57.

- 3 This issue was discussed by Stephen Boulter, "Could Aquinas Accept Semantic Anti-Realism?" *Philosophical Quarterly* 48 (1998), 504–13; and myself, "Mind-World Identity Theory and Semantic Realism: Haldane and Boulter on Aquinas," *Philosophical Quarterly* 50 (2000), 82–7.
- 4 Hilary Putnam, *The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body and World* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- 5 Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo San Tommaso d'Aquino* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1939); *Partecipazione e causalità secondo San Tommaso d'Aquino* (Torino: Società editrice internazionale, 1960).
- 6 In *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, tomes 4–12 (Rome: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1889–1906); English trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 1920.
- 7 Of course, this presupposes a theory of the identity of objects which does not take its origin as an essential feature of an individual, contrary to Saul Kripke's point of view. See his *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).
- 8 "Causes and Conditions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1965), 245–64, reprinted in *Causation*, Ernst Sosa and Michael Tooley, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 33–55. The problem of preemption, as the above mentioned issue is widely known after David Lewis ("Causation," *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973), 556–67, reprinted in *Causation*, Sosa and Tooley, eds., 193–204), is normally considered a case for abandoning the conditional analysis of causation in favor of other accounts. Stephen Yablo's "De Facto Dependence," *Journal of Philosophy* 94 (2002), 130–48, for example, suggests that his theory of the *de facto* dependence (according to which an effect depends *de facto* on its cause, in the sense that the obtaining "natural" conditions make the effect in need of the cause) offers the best available solution to the problem of preemption. Nonetheless, we will consider the solutions available to a supporter of a conditional analysis, since Aquinas seems keen to endorse an analysis of that kind and our aim is to consider the plausibility of Aquinas's views.
- 9 Mackie deals with the problem of overdetermination by appealing to what he considers a common sense intuition, that is, the idea that no individual cause can be considered sufficient for the effect, when it concurs to produce it jointly with other causes. Cf. Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," 44.
- 10 Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," 36.
- 11 This limitation is due to the fact that this is not supposed to be a reductive definition of "A caused P". There may be more to the meaning of that expression than what has here been specified.
- 12 (i)–(iv) are taken literally from Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," 37. He thus justifies (iv): "As a rule, this [(iv)] means that whatever 'Y' represents was absent in this occasion. If 'Y' represents a single conjunction of factors, then it was absent if at least one of its conjuncts was absent; if it represents a disjunction, the it was absent if each of its disjuncts was absent. But we do not wish to exclude the possibility that 'Y' should be, or contain as a disjunct, a conjunction one of whose conjuncts is A or require that this conjunct should have been absent." The reason for not wanting this is that A could cause P jointly either with X or with a Z, such that AZ belongs to Y. In some cases, it could be possible that X and Z obtain at the same time. When this is the case, and A causes P, both AX and AZ obtain.
- 13 Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," 39–40.
- 14 Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," 40.
- 15 Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," 40.

- 16 Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," 41.
- 17 One could contend that the fact that Aquinas supports (1) does not commit him necessarily to a conditional analysis of causation along the lines suggested by Mackie, since (1) is also compatible with a counterfactual analysis such as David Lewis's, "Causation," 193–204. Two replies can be offered to this. First, Lewis's proposal is so highly contentious (cf. Paul Horwich, "Lewis's Programme," reprinted in *Causation*, Sosa and Tooley, eds., 208–16, and Jonathan Bennett, "Event Causation: the Counterfactual Analysis," reprinted in *Causation*, 217–33), that it can hardly be seen as dictating requirements that any conditional approach along the lines of (1) should satisfy. Although not free from problems, Mackie's proposal seems more plausible (cf. Nancy Cartwright, *Nature's Capacities and Their Measurements* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), and Judea Pearl, *Causality. Models, Reasoning, and Inference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)). Second, Lewis's theory is grounded on metaphysical assumptions (such as the distinction between existence and actuality) extremely distant from Aquinas's. Desiderata resulting from his theory, therefore, are set in a framework which Aquinas could not accept in the first place. On the other hand, reformulating Lewis's theory of causation in a framework consistent with Aquinas's, if at all possible, would be longer (and thus less recommended) than elaborating a conditional analysis.
- 18 Aristotle, *Physics* II, 3, 195a 29–b 30 and Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V, 2, 1013 b 29–1014 a 25. *Physics*, R. P. Hardie and K. Gaye, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947); *Aristotle. Physics. Books I & II*, W. Charlton, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); *Metaphysics. Books IV, V & VI*, Christopher Kirwan, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); *Aristotle. Metaphysics, Books Z and H, Translated with a Commentary*, David Bostock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). The difference between a distinction of causes into species and one into modes is explained by Aquinas *In Meta.* V, 3, 783: "Causes are distinguished in to [species] and into modes. For the distinction into species is based on different formal aspects of causality, and is equivalently a division based on essential differences, which constitute species. But the division of causes into modes is based on the different relationships between causes and things caused, and therefore pertains to those causes which have the same formal aspect of causality." *In XII libros metaphysicorum expositio*, M. R. Cathala and R. M. Spiazzi, eds. (Turin–Rome: Marietti, 1971); *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, John P. Rowan, trans. (Notre Dame, Ind.: Dumb Ox Books, 1995), my revision of this translated passage.
- 19 *Physics* II, 3, 195 a 30.
- 20 II, 4, 189. *In VIII libros physicorum expositio*, in *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII*, tome 2; *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath and W. Edmund Thirkel, trans. (Notre Dame, Ind.: Dumb Ox Books, 2001).
- 21 The problem of the intelligibility of claims about a hierarchy of forms in Aquinas is discussed in my "Aquinas on Sensible Forms and Semimaterialism," *Review of Metaphysics* 54 (2000), 43–63.
- 22 About this point, it must be noted that Aquinas is inconsistent. This claim is quite explicit *In Phys. expo.* II, 4, 188 "one cause is said to be prior to another," but it is denied *In Meta.* V, 3, 785: "[the distinction applies] when the cause is one, but is considered according to the sequence which reason sets up between the universal and the particular; for the universal is naturally prior and the particular subsequent."
- 23 *In Meta.* V, 3, 785.
- 24 *In Phys. expo.* II, 6, 190.

- 25 This claim is true under the assumption that, contrary to Kripke's contention, *Naming and Necessity*, its origin is not an identifying feature of a thing.
- 26 *In Phys. expo.* II, 6, 190.
- 27 *In Meta.* V, 3, 788.
- 28 *In Meta.* V, 3, 788.
- 29 *In Phys. expo.* II, 6, 190 (my translation).
- 30 *In Meta.* V, 3, 789.
- 31 All these references are from *In Meta.* and *In Phys. expo.* sources already cited.
- 32 *In Meta.* V, 3, 792.
- 33 *In Meta.* V, 3, 793.
- 34 *In Meta.* V, 3, 790.
- 35 *In Meta.* V, 3, 791.
- 36 *Physics* II, 5, 196b 10–15.
- 37 *Physics* II, 5, 197a 8–15. I have revised Charlton's translation of *sumbebêkos* with "concurrent" by the more traditional "accidental". My reason for doing this has to do with the importance of the traditional term "accident" in all medieval commentaries of Aristotle and particularly in Aquinas.
- 38 "Infinite" according to the Latin translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* by William of Moerbeke, which was commented on by Aquinas. That version suggests an interesting point, which was developed by Aquinas: since there are infinite accidental causes, nobody can know all the accidental causes of an event.
- 39 Aristotle explains the relation between chance and final causes in *Physics* II, 5 and 6.
- 40 Cf. *In Phys. expo.* II, 8, 208.
- 41 *In Phys. expo.* II, 8, 214 (translation modified by me).
- 42 *In Phys. expo.* II, 9, 218 (translation modified by me).
- 43 This claim is contrary to Kripke's thesis on origin and *de re* necessity. According to Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, the origin of an object is necessary for its identification across the possible worlds in which that very object exists. He appeals to the intuition according to which a man would not be the individual he is, had he sprung from a different sperm and/or egg. This could seem to clash with the views supported by me, since the efficient, material, formal and final causes seem to be part of the origin of an object. Kripke's point, however, rests on intuitions about a few somewhat dramatic examples and he does not consider, for example, cases of slow and systematic replacement of matter which impinge on our intuitions in the opposite direction. David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 133 ff., criticizes Kripke on these grounds and suggests the possibility that material causes need not be essential for the objects they cause. Wiggins rejects Kripke's view on the grounds of his spatio-temporal criterion of identity: an object (he discusses artifacts) may be the same object it is in all possible worlds in which it maintains its essential properties throughout its spatio-temporal history, no matter what material it is made of. Naturally, in all the possible worlds in which it is that same object it is, it needs to be made of a right kind of material, suitable to sustain all the properties which it needs to have throughout its spatio-temporal history. The same defense can be extended to the other three kinds of causes.
- 44 I am grateful to Sarah Broadie, John Cottingham and John Haldane for their comments on an earlier version of this essay. Naturally, all remaining faults are entirely mine.

Chapter Six

Instantaneous Change Without Instants

David S. Oderberg

1. Introduction

In this essay, I first set out the principles of change, paying particular attention to the need for a support for all changes and to the need for prime matter. I then discuss the nature of time, arguing that time is not actually composed of durationless instants but that instants can be understood as limits to an infinite process of potential division. I then give a definition of instants in terms of intervals and propose a way of modeling them. In the next section I bring together the two previous sections by explaining change as an instantaneous process that does not involve actual instants. In the final section I draw out a larger metaphysical moral that emphasizes the role of potentiality and sees the potentiality in change and the potentiality in time as but different aspects of the same radical potentiality in nature.

2. Principles of Change

Change is an indisputable reality. All natural bodies are mutable or subject to change. Change or mutation is the passing of a thing from one state or condition to another. In traditional terminology, change is a *transition* (*transitus*) from potentiality to actuality. All things (and I now restrict the term *thing* to natural bodies) are finite and as such are a mixture of potentiality and actuality: what they *are* and what they *may become*. A child is potentially an adult and as such is *in potentiality* with respect to adulthood, though it is *actually* a child. A brown table is potentially a red table; a bronze statue of Hercules is potentially a bronze statue of Demeter; a cabbage is potentially food. Not only are all things a mixture of actuality and potentiality and hence subject to *becoming*, but one might tentatively argue a priori that they are in constant *process* of becoming something else. The reason is that being in potentiality means being in a state of readiness to enter one of a range of new states; but to be prepared for this, an object needs to be in a constant state of motion or kinematic reconfiguration in order to receive or enter one state or the other; which means a constant process of change.¹

A posteriori, it can be seen from current physical theory (which I shall accept for the purpose of argument) that it is impossible for an object to be cooled to absolute zero.² Absolute zero is by definition a state of absolute non-motion of the object and its parts. If an object were at absolute zero it would be in a state of zero entropy

or disorder and zero energy, which would be sufficient for it not to be able to reach any new state. This is said to violate Heisenberg uncertainty since the object would have definite zero position and momentum. A crucial assumption of the claim that every thing is in process of becoming is that space and time (or at least time³) are continuous and so are not structured in a way that allows discrete jumps from state to state with no intervening periods of change involving preparedness to receive the new state. Quantum theory allows for discrete, quantized change – in levels of energy, for instance – but only against a background of continuous space and time in which other continuous processes, such as electron revolution, are still taking place.⁴

The claim that every thing is in the process of becoming something else is not equivalent to the Heraclitean doctrine that everything is change. The latter, taken at face value, implicitly denies that there are substantially unchanging subjects of change: the very idea that there could be a single, persisting object O which changes from F to G runs counter to the Heraclitean doctrine, since it posits a substantially unchanging subject. It was no misunderstanding for Cratylus to have considered too weak (if not inconsistent) Heraclitus's claim that one cannot step into the same river twice, instead preferring never to say anything but only wave his finger. Heraclitus ought to have said that one cannot even step into a river *once*.⁵ Indeed the very idea that *everything* is change (rather than that every *thing* is in process of change) is incoherent because the very concept of change entails the existence of *that which* is changing. At the extreme, we might say that everything within the universe is change – but we must still posit a single, substantially unchanging universe that is changing in respect of its characteristics, in virtue of whose persistence through change it can coherently be supposed that everything within it is change. Change requires a subject of change and by definition that subject does not itself change *qua subject*.

There are four basic kinds of change. A thing can change quantitatively, which involves changes of size, dimension, mass, volume, shape, and so on (these not being mutually exclusive, of course); qualitatively, which involves the loss or gain of qualities such as color, temperature, texture, taste, or more generally causal powers, material constitution, and so on; and it can change in respect of place, via motion (local change). These are *accidental* changes.⁶ But there is also substantial change, in virtue of which a substance, conceived as an ontologically independent entity,⁷ changes into another kind of substance, such as: the digestion of a plant into nutrients capable of metabolism by an animal; the hydrolysis of water into new chemical compounds; the decomposition of water by electrolysis into hydrogen and oxygen; the transformation of a carbon atom into a boron atom by electron capture;⁸ the change of a living body into a corpse. All of these kinds of change involve the same fundamental process consisting of five elements: (i) a thing to be changed, whether substantially or qualitatively (I will use the traditional term “accidentally”); we can think of this as the *initial state*, as long as we remember that the state is a state of some thing.⁹ It is from the initial state that the change (or movement, in the broad sense) begins; (ii) the thing resulting from change, which we might call the terminal or resultant state,¹⁰ in which the change or movement

finds completion; (iii) a subject of change, best understood as a substantial support of the change; (iv) an agent or force which produces the change; (v) an actual *transition* or movement in which the change essentially consists.¹¹

The first and second elements should be acceptable enough but something needs to be said in defense of the other three. As to the need for an agent or force to produce change – in short, an efficacious cause – we need to note that this requirement derives from the very fact of change understood as the actualization of some potentiality or other. The presence of a state of passive potentiality – and here the term “passive” must be brought in as a qualifier¹² since we are not talking about active potentiality or the power of a thing to act or behave in a certain way but the power of a thing to receive an alteration – involves the correlative absence of the actualizing principle which is the terminal state of the change (in Aristotelian terminology, the *form*). And the actualizing principle or form cannot be said to be already *in* the potentiality, since this would be tantamount to denying change altogether; it is not right to say that greenness is already *in* the potential of a red wall to become green. Greenness is nowhere in the red wall before it receives a coat of green paint: all we can correctly say is that the red wall has the potential to become green. But then if the new form (the resultant of change) is not in the potentiality of the thing to be changed, but is truly absent, there is no way that potentiality can *of itself* produce greenness – for, as the axiom goes, *nemo dat quod non habet*: you cannot give what you do not have. Hence there must be an efficacious cause, such as a painter, which operates to turn the red wall green, his paint and a paintbrush working in the appropriate way. The same goes for all kinds of change: whatever changes or moves is changed or moved by another.¹³

As to the substantial support of change, we can see that in the case of accidental change – qualitative, quantitative and local – the support is precisely the bearer of the accidents: when a red wall is painted green, it is the wall which supports the change; the same goes for micro-level change, for instance the ionization of an atom, where it is the atom that undergoes accidental change. The same applies to local change, where the support is the thing which moves;¹⁴ and again, this applies as much at the micro-level as at the macro level – the emission of an alpha particle¹⁵ from an atom of uranium 238 involves the movement of the particle. But what about the case of substantial change, such as the hammering of a wall into a pile of rubble or the transformation of the atom of uranium 238 into thorium 234 as a result of alpha decay? Here it is not so obvious that there is a substantial support, but it is also by no means clear that the notion of support can be done away with in this type of change. This can be brought out by means of a general argument. There are three alternative ways of explaining substantial change.

Firstly, one might do away with talk of supports altogether. When the wall is hammered into rubble, what changes? The wall pure and simple, it might be said. But to say that the wall itself changes is ambiguous as between substantial and accidental change; the wall also changes when it receives a coat of green paint over its red surface. So how then can we distinguish between the two kinds of change? One might say that when the wall is hammered into rubble it *turns into* something else; but that will not do, since the red wall turns into a green wall when it is

painted; and a child turns into an adult but there is only one human being. Alternative locutions will either inherit the ambiguity of the verb “change,” so we will need a new locution to mark the distinction or else we will have to deny the distinction altogether. Denying the distinction is problematic, for what does it mean? Are we to say that all substantial change is really accidental, or that all accidental change is really substantial, or that there is simply unqualified change? The first two options deny the existence of evident facts: some things just do survive change and others do not, so it is incumbent on the opponent to come up with a theory of unqualified change that does not distinguish between survival and non-survival or at least assimilates every change to one or the other. Perhaps certain kinds of process philosophy take this approach, but they are of doubtful coherence if they invoke the concept of a process while refusing to answer questions such as: What is it that undergoes the process? Does anything survive a process? As usually understood, process philosophy denies fixed realities in nature and so might be thought of as advocating only substantial change; but the process philosopher does not want to invoke the concept of substance, even substance that is short lived, since substances are fixed realities. Yet it cannot be only accidental change that the process philosopher believes in, since accidental change entails the existence of a fixed subject of change. The concept of a process is subject to just the same sorts of concern as that of a change insofar as gain or loss of existence is in view.

On the other hand, marking the distinction between substantial and accidental change with a new locution does not explain the phenomenon, it merely names it. So the denier of a support for substantial change has to find an alternative metaphysical account of what is going on when one substance turns into a numerically distinct substance. And the only way, it seems, is to speak of *creation and annihilation*: when the wall is hammered into a pile of rubble, the wall is annihilated and replaced by a newly created pile of rubble. The problem with this account, however, is that in nature there is no pure creation and annihilation. The sorts of phenomena we speak of when we speak of creation and annihilation are ones in which prior material is turned into something else (where we do *not* assume by “turned into” that the prior material *survives* the change – on that question see below): hence the creation of a human being by reproduction is properly called procreation rather than creation *simpliciter*, since the previously existing gametes are the material out of which the child is formed. Similarly, when the wall is reduced to rubble it is the previously existing matter which is turned into rubble. Creation and annihilation, strictly speaking, are out of nothing and into nothing, respectively. In physics it is a fundamental truth that energy can neither be created nor destroyed (the first law of thermodynamics). This simply reflects the metaphysical truth that since all changes in nature require natural causes, and since those causes are finite, and since finite causes cannot create something out of nothing or turn something into nothing, a natural substantial change is not a series of creations and annihilations. Positively speaking, a substantial change is an actualization of the potentiality which some substance has with respect to some new substance: walls can be turned into rubble but not into fish. It is the potentiality which stretches across the change, becoming actualized by it, and so there

cannot have been pure annihilation and creation when one substance is turned into another.

The first way of explaining substantial change is therefore ruled out. The second way appeals to an apparently obvious fact: that when the wall is turned into rubble, it is the *matter* of the wall which survives the change and acts as support. So why can't we simply posit matter as the support of substantial change? The reason is that the support used to explain substantial change cannot be something whose existence during the change is not guaranteed. When the wall is hammered into rubble, some matter survives in the rubble but other matter is dispersed to the winds. The matter of the wall undergoes all sorts of atomic and molecular changes as a result of the hammering: if the wall is pulverized, are we to say that the heap of fine powder before us is the same matter as that of the wall? Even if it is, the fact is that substantial change can occur without the preservation of sensible matter: the matter can undergo radical molecular change, as when flesh is burned to ashes. Is it the quarks that persist? Or some other as-yet-undiscovered particle? According to current physical theory, even quarks can be substantially transformed into other quarks: for example, a quark triplet of (bottom, top, top) can, in virtue of the strong nuclear force, be changed into a triplet of (down, top, top); indeed the bottom quark could also have been changed into a strange or charmed quark. This is held to be consistent with the conservation laws, and according to quantum theory, quark transformation must eventually occur. So we do not yet have any conceptual assistance at the micro-level and there is no reason to think that new particles yet to be discovered will behave any differently. So we must accept the possibility of *total material conversion*. But we must also avoid an infinite regress of substantial changes with no support, which not only makes no progress on the previous predicament of distinguishing substantial change from creation and annihilation but is itself of no explanatory force since the explanation of change must come to an end.

Hence the third way of looking at substantial change, involving the much derided but still sound Aristotelian doctrine of *prime matter* as the true support. Prime matter is not actually a kind of matter but a *wholly indeterminate substrate* underlying substantial change. It is, in other terminology, *pure potentiality*, the something which can be transformed by an actualizing principle into anything which nature allows. It is the raw material of the universe, so raw in fact that it is not in any familiar sense material at all. But it must exist to support substantial transformation, and its existence is a corollary of the very *finiteness* of the natural world and everything in it. Much more can be said, both for and against prime matter, but it is not our principal concern here. It will, however, make a return to the explanatory stage later when the accounts of time and change defended in this essay are brought together and the root of their unity is briefly explored.

Finally, change requires a genuine *transition* from one state to another.¹⁶ The standard contemporary definition of change is therefore inadequate; for instance, "An object undergoes a change if, and only if, it possesses a property at one time and does not possess this property at an earlier or later time."¹⁷ Not only does this formulation fail to cover substantial change but it makes no mention of the need for a transition and hence is consistent with the notion of change as mere *replacement*,

for example, by annihilation and creation. Of course, on a tenseless theory of time it is hard to see how change could be considered to be anything *other* than replacement, but the topic of the A-theory versus the B-theory cannot be explored here. I am taking it as self-evident that change is not mere replacement, that when a red wall is painted green it really does *move*, in a broad sense, from one state to another; that our locutions such as “become,” “turn,” “develop,” and so on, are not mere figures of speech or relics of a stone-age metaphysic; and that any approach which denies this would leave the phenomenon we call change miraculous at best, utterly inexplicable at worst.

How are we to understand the concept of a transition from state to state? We can only do this via a consideration of the role of time in change, and it is this which will now be the focus of our concern.

3. Time and Instants

Time is generally thought, by both philosophers and physicists, to have the topology of the real number line. As it is for the continuum of real numbers, so it is for the continuum of time, which is considered to be constituted by a succession of instants totally ordered by the *earlier than/later than* relation. It is arguable that at least parts of classical mechanics can be modeled using time as merely dense and not continuous,¹⁸ but standard models of both classical and quantum physics take time to be continuous; if it were dense this would not affect the argument to be presented here. Further, no standard theory takes it to be discrete.¹⁹ The question to be considered is whether time is made up of durationless instants.

The short answer to the question is that it cannot be, for the reason Zeno originally proposed in respect of lines: if a temporal interval or a line segment were composed of durationless instants or points of zero length respectively, then neither the interval nor the segment could have a length greater than zero. The usual approach to the problem now is to invoke the mathematical consistency of proposing finite sums to series of infinite numbers, but this does not dissolve the paradox since infinite series never literally sum to a finite number, they only *converge* on it as a *limit*. (For instance, the series $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} \dots$ converges on 1.) Similarly, when derivatives are invoked to model motion at an instant, they are only ever *limits* to an infinite series of measurements: instantaneous velocity, for instance, is no more nor less than $v = \lim (dt \rightarrow 0) dx/dt$. While it is convenient to ignore talk of limits when calculating using such concepts as instantaneous velocity, and while such concepts may be mathematically consistent, the ontological truth is that limit concepts do not denote actual entities. And an instant, conceived of as durationless (not as a fleeting “chronon” or “instanton” of some physical speculation), is just such a limit concept – it is not an actual something, it is an actual *nothing*. And no number of nothings can ever make up a something, no matter what sorts of mathematical technique are invoked.

Yet it has seriously been suggested by David Bostock (or perhaps semi-seriously, as we shall see) that continuum-many points can be constructed into a line. The passage is so striking it is worth quoting in full:

How *can* we conceive of a line as made up of nothing but points, which cannot touch one another? Imagine that you have an inexhaustible supply of points to hand; how could you ‘put them together’ (as it were, ‘one at a time’) so as to make a line out of them? Well, we can say nowadays that the answer is this. First set down a denumerable infinity of points that is dense in the line, for example by putting down the two end-points of the desired line, and then by setting down a further point in the middle of any stretch between two points already set down. (Note that we do *not* try to put the points down ‘in succession’ from left to right.) When you have finished this (!), then consider all the Dedekind cuts in the points already set down, in other words all ways of separating those points into two groups, with all of one group to the left of all of the other. For each such cut, put in a further point to be the point at which the separation is made (if you do not have one already – that is, if there is not either a rightmost point of the left group, or a leftmost point of the right group). We may note, incidentally, that to complete this stage you will in fact need more than a denumerable infinity of points (so it may take you a little longer than the first stage), but when you have done it you are through. The result is now a continuous line. But although we have a proof of this fact, must we not still admit that it is absolutely amazing? No point that has been put down touches any of the others, and yet the result is a line with no gaps in it anywhere! No wonder that Aristotle could not see how such a construction of the line could succeed. *Indeed, I think I would admit that I cannot exactly ‘see’ it myself*[emphasis added].²⁰

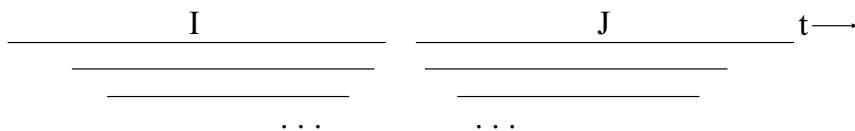
One wonders, with all the scare quotes, exclamation marks, “as it weres,” “amazings,” “little longers,” and the final, rather damning admission, just how serious the author was when he penned these words. The first thing to note is that Bostock takes it for granted that it is possible to construct a completed infinity – all he does is to show you how. Nevertheless the very idea that one can “traverse the infinite,” to use the terminology of Aristotle and the medieval philosophers, is highly questionable.²¹ Bostock’s language (if he is being serious) makes it clear that he believes one can, quite literally, complete an infinite totality. He might as easily have said that you can count to infinity simply by starting with zero and counting one number larger than any number you have counted. Easier said than done, you might retort, and you would be within your rights to do so. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, is the fact that Bostock appears to have missed the whole point (if one may excuse the pun) of Aristotle’s objections. It is not simply the concern that the points will not touch and so not form a genuine continuum; but that they cannot touch because they are *indivisible nothings*! Hence it makes no sense to “put down end-points” or any other points, whether from left to right, in some other sort of succession, or in any way whatsoever. The task is equally impossible for the construction of a dense line as for that of a continuous one.

Nevertheless we do want to assign *some* sort of reality to instants. They might not be actually anything – but they are *potentially* something. They are the potential limit of division of a time interval. In other words, to say that time is divisible into instants is to say that it is *potentially infinite*: there is no actual metaphysical terminus to division, but division can really go on indefinitely. Like prime matter itself, instants are not themselves actual: they are, quite literally, *formless*. But they are a kind of reality, namely potential, and without them the very structure of time

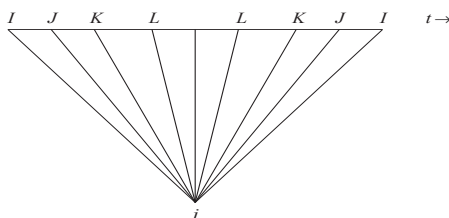
could not be explained any more than motion and its derivatives. Similarly, although there are no actual infinities, the world is full of *potential* infinities.²² This is clearly the position of Aristotle when he says, “nothing is actually infinite (*energeian ... apeiron*) but only potentially so for the purpose of division (*dunamei ... epi tēn diairesin*)”.²³ We cannot banish instants as limits from our ontology any more than we can banish limits in general. We cannot say, of the function $f(x) = 1/x$, that it does not *really* approach infinity as x approaches 0, unless we want to abolish the function altogether; a somewhat extreme step. The function really does have a limit. But this does not mean that $f(x)$ *actually reaches* infinity, by which we mean that the line is not actually infinitely extended in the $f(x)$ direction. We can never actually get to $f(x) = \text{infinity}$ because the line never actually stretches that far. This natural way of talking is, I claim, also the correct way of talking. And as far as the mathematics goes, we know that $f(x)$ never actually approaches infinity in the sense of the line’s being actually infinitely extended, because for $x = 0$ $f(x)$ is *undefined*, not *infinity*: the latter value would create mathematical havoc, as is well known. Hence potentiality, in the form of the limit, is built into the very fabric of mathematical thinking. And so it is as far as time is concerned: to posit actual durationless instants as the constituents of the time interval leads to as much absurdity as positing $f(x) = \text{infinity}$ for $x = 0$ when $f(x) = 1/x$.

But if instants are to be granted a reality as potential entities, the resultants of a process of division that can never actually be completed, how are we best to understand them? I propose that we take *intervals* to be the primary reality – the actual entities that exist as constituents of larger intervals – and define instants in terms of these, using only the basic concepts of mereology and temporal ordering.²⁴ Informally, the proposal is as follows. Every interval is made up of parts which are themselves intervals. Every interval can be divided into three parts, one of which is an *inner part*²⁵ and the others of which are *outer parts*. One of the outer parts *entirely precedes* the inner part (that is, with no temporal overlap), and the other outer part *entirely succeeds* the inner part. Both outer parts are *contiguous* with the inner part in the following sense: there is no interval *entirely between* either of the outer parts and the inner part (entirely succeeding the outer part and entirely preceding the inner part, or entirely preceding the outer part and entirely succeeding the inner part) and no interval *overlapping* (in the mereological sense) either or both of the inner and each outer part and containing a part entirely succeeding the outer part and/or entirely preceding the inner part, or entirely preceding the outer part and/or entirely succeeding the inner part. From this it is evident that for any interval the two outer parts and the inner part *wholly constitute* that interval (without repetition or remainder) and are present in that interval in the order of outer part–inner part–outer part.

Since every interval has an inner part, every inner part of any interval has an inner part since inner parts are themselves intervals. We can then think of instants initially as *infinite nested sequences of inner parts of intervals*.²⁶ But not any sequence will do, since we want to rule out the following sequences as instants:



The reason is that we will not then have a unique sequence for each instant – it will be possible to converge on the same limit from different directions, to put the matter informally. So we need to stipulate²⁷ that the inner parts need to be *symmetrical*, in the sense that dividing the initial inner part in half splits the interval into halves consisting of half of the inner part plus each outer part; and similarly for every inner part. Hence the outer parts must be equal in size, but not necessarily equal to the inner part. So we can then define an instant as an *infinite nested sequence of symmetrical inner parts of an interval*. Indeed the sequence must be *maximally* infinite in the sense that it contains every symmetrical inner part of the given interval. For practical purposes this is all we need, since we are defining the instant i relative to a given interval I . Once given I , there is a unique nested sequence that defines a unique instant i within the interval. Nevertheless we have not secured uniqueness in an absolute sense, since there are still an infinite number of nested sequences defining i relative to an infinite number of other intervals:²⁸



What unites the nested sequences in the above diagram is that they can be ordered from smallest to largest by the *part* relation, and for one sequence s to be part of another sequence t is for s to have an initial interval which is a symmetrical inner part of the initial interval of t . The maximal nested sequence will have all the other smaller ones as parts but will not itself be part of any other. It is this *maximally infinite class of maximally infinite nested sequences of symmetrical inner parts of intervals* which is the unique abstract entity that defines an instant.

Note also that every nested sequence s will be *strictly totally ordered*: totally, since for any two intervals i_1 and i_2 in s , either i_1 is an inner part of i_2 or i_2 is an inner part of i_1 or else $i_1 = i_2$; strictly, since “ x is an inner part of y ” is irreflexive and asymmetric (nothing is an inner part of itself, and for any i_1 and i_2 , if i_1 is an inner part of i_2 then i_2 is not an inner part of i_1); and the inner part relation is also transitive. The same applies to the class of nested sequences that defines the instant. Further, the totally ordered set of the instants themselves (that is, the totally ordered set of totally ordered sets of nested sequences) can be shown to be at least dense.²⁹

It should, of course, be noted that there are other proposals for constructing instants out of, or reducing them to, other kinds of entity. Russell, for example, construes instants as maximal classes of simultaneous events.³⁰ Another suggestion

is to define them as equivalence classes of ordered pairs of intervals.³¹ For the metaphysician, however, engaged in the central task of understanding the nature of certain kinds of entity, it is not simply a question of choosing, say, an abstract modeling that is the most elegant, or simple, or mathematically satisfying. Nor can the metaphysician rest content with taking certain models to be mere notational variants of each other, an attitude that leads straight to conventionalism about our understanding of reality. The point of grasping and explicating a kind of entity in a certain way is to conform to what fundamental ontology requires; and what it requires is an elaboration of an essentially commonsense view of the world in terms of basic categories, and a correlative appreciation of what entities do or do not have their own reality. That is the main reason why, say, sequences of intervals are to be preferred to Russell's sets of simultaneous events when explicating instants. There is no *prima facie* explanatory connection between events and simultaneity on the one hand, and instants on the other – *except* insofar as events import into the concept of time simpliciter, the concepts of duration and simultaneity. But there is nothing about events or simultaneity *per se* that should make us think that we do best to understand instants in terms of them. On the other hand, there is a manifest, commonsense explanatory connection between instants and intervals. But that does not make a definition in terms of ordered pairs of intervals preferable either, since it requires that we take as primitive the relation of *meeting* between a pair of intervals: we can then take the instant to be a set of pairs of meeting intervals. This approach is ontologically inadequate since it seeks to explain what should be fundamental in terms of something less basic. Intervals meet *at a point*; so instants cannot be defined in terms of meeting intervals since the latter are already partly defined in terms of the former, not explicitly but implicitly, as the very concept of a meeting between intervals imports that of an instant. Moreover, the order of understanding would seem to go in the same direction. To try to grasp the concept of an instant in terms of a meeting between intervals is not explanatorily useful, as grasping the very concept of a meeting requires grasping that of an instant to begin with.

There is an essential conceptual connection between instants and intervals, nevertheless. Thinking of the matter pre-theoretically, there is the clear idea that somehow instants are what we reach when we “burrow” into intervals long enough, but that instants do not, on the other hand, *really* exist. Put in this way, of course, the idea sounds faintly absurd to the seasoned ontologist. But this, I submit, says more about the divorce of much contemporary ontology from reality than about the alleged absurdity of our commonsense ideas about the world. Choosing a definition of instants in terms of intervals not only respects common sense in this way; it also lays the foundation for an understanding of change that respects our non-philosophical, intuitive grasp of reality. It is to this that I now turn.

4. Instantaneous Change

Change takes time. And yet in another sense it takes no time at all. It may take an hour to paint a red wall green. But if we ask, “When, *exactly*, did the wall become

green?”, what are we to answer? We might say, “When the last coat of green paint was applied.” But when, exactly, was that? “When the last lick of paint was applied to the coat.” And when, exactly, was that? “When the last drop of paint from the last lick hit the surface of the wall.” But we need not stop there. We can get more and more precise, and if we like we can fetch the latest in microscopic instruments to determine when the last molecule of green paint touched the surface of the wall. We might even start doing some quantum theory. But to the determined enquirer, that still will not be enough. Note that the sort of question I am posing here is not the same as the question of vagueness. The latter is a question about, in our example, what counts as the wall’s becoming green – is it the first coat of green paint, the last, the last swipe of the brush across the surface, the last droplet of green paint on it? And so on. But even if we stipulate one event or another, and even if the event takes place at the molecular or sub-molecular level, there is still a question about locating the exact time at which the change takes place. This is not a matter of vagueness but of the possibility of ever greater precision.

That precision allows us to move further and further back from the terminal state of an object *x* (let it be the possession of property *G*), and further and further forward from the initial state (let it be the possession of contrary property *F*), without there being any obvious stopping point *except* for the putative point at which *x* is both *F* and *G*, which, since they are contraries, is impossible. So there simply does not appear to be any stopping point. Or we could say, since we are moving closer and closer together from opposite directions, that the stopping point is the one at which *x* changes *instantaneously* from *F* to *G*. But what point is that? It cannot be a point at which *Fx*, since, if *x* is genuinely changing at that point, it cannot *be* *F*, at least not wholly. Similarly it cannot be a point at which *Gx*, since if that were the case *x* would have *already* changed. So is it a point at which *x* is *partly* *F* or *partly* *G*? But that would only push the problem a stage back and we would have to locate the point at which *x* changed from being *F* to being partly *F* or partly *G*. Could the instant at which *x* changes be the instant at which it is neither *F* nor *G*? But now we need to know at what point, exactly, *x* passes from being *F* to being not-*F*, since this too is a change, and also the point at which it passes from not-*F* to *G*. Further, are we really to suppose that there is an instant at which – to continue with the example of the red wall that changes to green – the wall is neither red nor green? But then what color is it? Not blue or purple. But it cannot be colorless either, since all material objects have to have some color or other.

Here we run up against one of the governing principles of change: the generation of one thing is the corruption of another, and the corruption of one thing is the generation of another.³² The loss of *F* by *x* just *is* the acquisition of *G*; the red wall loses its redness *by* acquiring greenness. This does not imply that the wall is ever red and green simultaneously; what it implies is that actualizing principles – forms – are lost in virtue of being driven out by other forms. Consider our being confronted with a material object that has one among a range of properties of a certain general kind – be it color, temperature, shape, size, quantity, location, configuration of parts – and then loses that property. One way of accounting for

what happens when it loses the property is to appeal to the idea that if an object is capable of possessing a range of properties of a certain general kind, then it *must* possess one of them. If it is capable of being colored it must be *some* color; if it is capable of having a size, it must have *some* size. The idea is, I believe, correct, but spelling it out requires closer attention to the distinction between determinable and determinate qualities than can be given here. We want to say, for instance, that an object capable of being colored must have some color; but not that an object capable of being red must have some shade of red. We want to say that an object capable of having one of the three (normal) states of solid, liquid or gas must be in one of those states; but not that an object capable of being liquid must be in some liquid state or other (boiling, simmering, still, disturbed, and so on). But the general principle is that forms are driven out by forms, not by nothing. So to say that the wall enters a state of non-coloredness at the instant of transition between red and green just does not seem right. It turns a world that appears quite clearly to be fundamentally continuous (even at the quantum level, where quantized change only occurs against a background of continuous change) into one that is full of gaps all over, where macroscopic objects undergoing accidental change jump from accident to accident with no comparable accident in between. Maybe, it might be replied, the jumps are there but they are too small to measure; maybe the world just is like one long movie made up of a sequence of still frames. To which the rejoinder is: why are the jumps *always* so small? Why don't we see, even occasionally, long jumps from state to state over perceptible intervals in which neither F nor G nor any other accident in the relevant range of accidents is possessed? If there is a law of nature making it so it has not been discovered yet; and no metaphysical principle governing size of jump is ready to hand.

I have been using an example of accidental change, but the phenomenon is just as striking, if not more so, in the case of substantial change. For if we are to claim that there is an instant of transition from substance S to substance T at which no substance at all exists – not just something that is neither S nor T – then we must account for what exists at that instant. It cannot be nothing at all, because we would again have the problems associated with jumps or replacements rather than genuine changes, and these have been raised already. Maybe what exists at the putative instant of transition is a bare particular; but a bare particular is also a nothing, at least nothing *actual*. Why not say, then, that it is pure potentiality, pure prime matter? Firstly, it is doubtfully coherent to speak of prime matter as in any way particularized, as though it came in parcels; the parcels could not have spatio-temporal characteristics, since prime matter has *no* characteristics, intrinsic or extrinsic. (How, then, to make sense of the differentiation of pure potentialities among distinct subjects of substantial change is a difficult question which cannot be answered here.³³) Secondly, to postulate prime matter as what exists in the interstice between S and T is to violate the very principles governing prime matter: (i) prime matter is changeless, and so cannot be either the terminus of a transition from a substance to it or the origin of a transition from it to a substance. This is because prime matter is, by definition, that which supports all substantial change, so for it to be the term of a substantial transition would require positing a further

sub-prime matter, *ad infinitum*, and no substantial change would have an explanation; (ii) prime matter, again by definition, does not exist without form, that is, without actualization as something of some kind or other. This is because prime matter is not nothing, it is a genuine reality destined to unite with actualizing principles to constitute distinct objects of distinct kinds in the natural world. As an entity within nature, it too is subject to the laws and operations of nature. But since it is, in itself, devoid of any characteristics on which the laws and operations of nature could gain a foothold, nature must work upon it *indirectly* through the forms which it takes on. So if nature must act on it, prime matter cannot exist without form.

We seem, then, to run up against serious obstacles in seeking to characterize instantaneous change in terms of an actual instant of change. But perhaps the most serious was already implicitly stated in the previous section: there *are* no actual instants. It is otiose to speculate at too great a length on what things are like at the instant of change if there is no such thing. Rather, we can speak of “change at an instant,” but if the earlier considerations are correct then this can only be given the same metaphysical interpretation as “velocity at an instant” or “acceleration at an instant.” The instant is a limit, and the limit is only a potentiality, not an actuality: it is the potential result of an infinite process of division, not an actual moment of time at which objects exist in certain states or configurations. But the crucial question now is: how do we reconcile the thought that change is instantaneous with the thought that there are no actual instants? We can take our cue from Aristotle:

Again, since a thing that changes continuously and has not perished or ceased from its change must either be changing or have changed in any part of the time of its change, *and since it cannot be changing in a moment* [emphasis added], it follows that it must have changed at every moment in time: consequently, since the moments are infinite in number, everything that is changing must have completed an infinite number of changes.³⁴

So that which has changed must have been changing and that which is changing must have changed, and a process of change is preceded by a completion of change and a completion by a process: *and we can never take any stage and say that it is absolutely the first* [emphasis added]. The reason of this is that no two things without parts can be contiguous, and therefore in change the process of division is infinite, just as lines may be infinitely divided so that one part is continually increasing and the other continually decreasing.³⁵

Our next point is that no process of change is infinite: for every change, whether between contradictories or between contraries, is a change from something to something. Thus in contradictory changes the positive or the negative, as the case may be, is the limit, e.g., being is the limit of coming to be and not-being is the limit of ceasing to be: and in contrary changes the particular contraries are the limits, since these are the extreme points of any such process of change ...³⁶

There is, on the Aristotelian view, no first stage of change. Change involves limits, and limits involve infinite divisibility; since there are an infinity of instants – understood *only potentially* – everything that changes must have completed an infinite number of changes. It is, I propose, by means of the sketch I have given above of the metaphysics of change and the metaphysics of time that all of these thoughts can be put together into a coherent whole. When an object x changes from F to G , or from F to not- F , the period of time in which the change takes place is *full* of forms, and the only forms which are present are the forms of F_{ness} and G_{ness} or the forms of F_{ness} and whatever form entails non- F_{ness} . In the case of substantial change, the forms are substantial forms; in the case of accidental change, they are accidental forms. There is no *void*, no period of any duration during which x is neither F nor not- F , neither F nor G ; still less is there a durationless instant at which this is the case. But there *is* change *at an instant*, as long as instants are understood derivatively just as motion at an instant or velocity at an instant are understood derivatively, these being in fact just special cases of change. Our model of change is thus:

_____ F _____ FFFF GGGG _____ G _____

where FFFF and GGGG approach each other infinitely – there never being adjacent F and G , there never being a void, and there never being a point of simultaneous, contrary F and G . There is no first moment of change since there is no last moment of F , and by parity of reasoning, no last moment either since there is no first moment of G . Yet Richard Sorabji has argued,³⁷ with special reference to motion (but of general application), that:

[t]here can be no first *position* away from the starting point, or last position away from the finishing point in a continuous motion, or in any other continuous change. Hence there can be no first *instant* of being away from the starting point or last *instant* of being away from the finishing point. No such considerations apply to being at the position of rest.³⁸

It is, he claims, reasonable to postulate an *asymmetry* between motion and rest because although there is no first position away from the starting point in the case of motion, there *is* a last position *at* the starting point, namely the position of rest itself. The problem here, however, is that the “hence” in the passage just quoted introduces a non-sequitur, inasmuch as it implies that there is a last instant of rest. Rest takes time just as motion does, and time is, as agreed on by both sides, infinitely divisible. So although there may be a final position in space for a resting object, it does not follow that there is a final position in time. This asymmetry between time and space (one of many) undercuts the spatial asymmetry invoked by Sorabji as between motion and rest. If we are to take the temporal dimension seriously then we are unable to find an asymmetry that will enable us to posit a last moment of rest any more than a first moment of motion. Motion and rest will conform to the same general model outlined above.

5. The Unity of Potentiality

Is there a larger metaphysical moral to be drawn from the above analysis of the metaphysics of time and change? I have defined the essence of change as the actualization of a pre-existing potentiality. I have also defined instants as the limits of a process of infinite potential division. It is my contention that these two potentialities are but different aspects of one and the same radical potentiality that lies at the heart of nature itself. Both are necessary for the explanation of change. The actualization of potentiality would not be possible without the potentiality that characterizes time; and if, as I would also contend (without space for a defense here) there is no time without change, the potentiality at the root of time would not be possible without the eduction of form from potentiality that is the essential note of change. In change, form succeeds form: every coming-to-be is a passing-away and every passing-away is a coming-to-be. Change is, then, a continuous process of loss and gain that is without gap and without contradiction. Change is instantaneous: without instants as limits it could not take place. To search for an actual instant of change, however, is to search in vain, for there are no actual instants at all. To search for a transition that does not consist in the actualization of potentiality is to search for a chimera. Transition there must be, and without the exceedingly small there is no transition; but to look for it *in* the exceedingly small is to miss its presence in the process at large. Ultimately the process is unfathomable – as unfathomable as the very potentiality that explains the finitude of the material universe and everything within it. In metaphysics, this is all the explanation we can hope for. In metaphysics, this is all the explanation we need.

Notes

- 1 This argument assumes that no object is capable of entering only one state, and that this is not just a metaphysical possibility but a physical necessity.
- 2 Which is equivalent to -273.15 degrees celsius below zero.
- 3 If current physical theory is correct, there would not appear to be a way of treating space as discontinuous if time is continuous, given their mathematical treatment as dimensions of a single continuous manifold. Be that as it may, there is nothing in the nature of space which suggests a priori that it could be discontinuous if time were continuous, and vice versa.
- 4 W. H. Newton-Smith, in *The Structure of Time* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 26–27, argues plausibly against Harré and Boscovitch who claim that there can be no discrete change of a parameter in continuous time.
- 5 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.5, 1010a10.
- 6 Note that the technical term *accident* refers to any modification or attribute of a thing; the attribute need not be accidental in the senses of non-essential, contingent or non-law like.
- 7 For theories of ontological independence as applied to substances, see: J. Hoffman and G. Rosenkrantz, *Substance: Its Nature and Existence* (London: Routledge, 1997); and E. J. Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics: Substance, Identity, and Time* (Oxford:

- Oxford University Press, 1998), ch.6, and his “Ontological Dependency,” *Philosophical Papers* 23 (1994), 31–48.
- 8 An atom of carbon 11 with 6 protons and 5 neutrons, after electron capture into the nucleus, is transformed into an atom of boron 11 with 5 protons, 6 neutrons and an ejected neutrino.
 - 9 In traditional terminology, the *terminus a quo*.
 - 10 Traditionally, *terminus ad quem*.
 - 11 The *transitus*.
 - 12 And will henceforth be used tacitly.
 - 13 As the scholastic principle goes, *Quidquid movetur, ab alio movetur*.
 - 14 In the case of local change, of course, it may be the other relatum which does the moving; but the object with respect to which it moves still bears distinct relational accidents. For the sake of simplicity I am here only concerned with intrinsic change, and hence for example with local change by an object in virtue of its own intrinsic motion.
 - 15 Consisting of two protons and two neutrons, that is, the nucleus of helium.
 - 16 Or from one thing to another; again, this will be taken as implicit.
 - 17 Quentin Smith in *A Companion to Metaphysics*, J. Kim and E. Sosa, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 83. This is typical of the definitions given in the standard reference books.
 - 18 Newton-Smith, *Structure of Time*, 121–26.
 - 19 From the beginning of quantum theory there has been speculation as to whether the space-time continuum should be abandoned because of the limits on measurement imposed by the theory. Even now it is thought that there is a Planck length, currently estimated at 10^{-35} m., which puts a limit on the measurement of space-time intervals. The fact that the estimate of the Planck length has been getting smaller must reflect the improvements in measurement techniques, which in turn suggests that physics has not yet reached the certain position of requiring discrete space-time lengths. And even if it did, this would only be because a theoretical limit on measurement had been discovered, not because an actually indivisible metaphysical unit (a *chronon*) had been discovered. Of course quantum theorists would object to just such a distinction between what is and what can be measured, but I assume a difference for the purpose of this essay and do not have room to explore the broader issue.
 - 20 David Bostock, “Aristotle on Continuity in *Physics* VI,” in *Aristotle’s Physics: A Collection of Essays*, L. Judson, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 179–212, at 186.
 - 21 See, for example, the arguments of William Lane Craig in W. L. Craig and Q. Smith, *Theism, Atheism and Big Bang Cosmology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), chs. I and III; and also my “Traversing the Infinite, the ‘Big Bang’, and the Kalam Cosmological Argument,” *Philosophia Christi* 4 (2002), 305–36. Aristotle’s term for traversing the infinite is *dielthein*: see *Physics* VI.10, 241b11; *Physics* VIII.9, 265a20. St Thomas Aquinas uses *pertransire*: see *ST* I, q. 46 a. 2.
 - 22 For a series of compelling arguments against actual infinities, see the discussion by William Lane Craig in Craig and Smith, *Theism, Atheism and Big Bang Cosmology*, esp. chs. I and III.
 - 23 Aristotle, *De Generatione et Corruptione* 1.3, 318a20 in *Loeb Classical Library* edition, E. S. Forster, trans. (London: Heinemann, 1955). According to David Bostock, there is a “tension” between Aristotle’s discussion of infinity in Books III and VI of the *Physics*: “Aristotle on Continuity in *Physics* VI,” at 180. I cannot find the tension. In Book VI he says that “everything continuous is divisible into divisibles that are

- infinitely divisible" (231b15), and repeats this at 232b23. Again, at 239b8 he says, "time is not composed of indivisible moments any more than any other magnitude is composed of indivisibles." So I find it mystifying that Bostock should say: "But in Book VI he shows no such tendency to be suspicious of the infinite, and apparently accepts without qualms that a line does ('actually') contain infinitely many points, that a stretch of time does ('actually') contain infinitely many instants, and so on." Hence Bostock's suggestion is incorrect that Aristotle solves Zeno's paradox of motion by holding "that one who traverses a finite distance has thereby completed a series of infinitely many distinct tasks, in traversing the infinitely many 'half-distances' contained within the original distance." Bostock cites 233a13ff. and 239b9 in this context, and yet even a cursory reading of these passages demonstrates that Aristotle accepts that the infinitude of the quantities covered in a finite time or length is an infinitude of *potential division only*. Translations from the *Physics* in this note and elsewhere in this chapter are from the version by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, R. McKeon, ed. (New York, NY: Random House, 1941).
- 24 My proposal closely follows that of Newton-Smith in *Structure of Time*, 134–38, but was conceived independently. Many of the details of my proposal are, however, not in Newton-Smith, for example, the need for classes of nested sequences. See Oderberg, "The Beginning of Existence," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 43 (2003), 145–57. For a similar approach in respect of points in general, see A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*. Corr. ed. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1978 [1929]), 294ff. See also J. van Benthem, *The Logic of Time* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), ch. I.4, and A. Galton, *Qualitative Spatial Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 245–46, citing J. Allen and P. J. Hayes, "Moments and Points in an Interval-Based Temporal Logic," *Computational Intelligence* 5 (1990), 225–38.
 - 25 I borrow the terminology from Newton-Smith.
 - 26 Again, I use Newton-Smith's terminology.
 - 27 As Newton-Smith does not.
 - 28 Note that there may be other functions which define differently curved – and hence distinct – sequences. This does not militate against my proposal, because uniqueness needs only to be guaranteed relative to the function chosen. Although I speak of *defining* instants as classes of sequences, this should be regarded as no more an *identification* of such classes with instants than any set-theoretic conception of number should be regarded as *identifying* numbers with certain kinds of set. See P. Benacerraf, "What Numbers Could Not Be," *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1965), 47–73. What I am calling a definition is no more than a theoretical representation of a fundamental metaphysical truth about infinite divisibility. Since it is a central claim of this essay that an instant is no more than a limit, it cannot itself be identified with any kind of class or sequence.
 - 29 Newton-Smith, *Structure of Time*, 137–38.
 - 30 Bertrand Russell, "On Order in Time," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 32 (1936), 216–28. Newton-Smith criticizes Russell's proposal for being unable to ensure that time is dense without assuming the controversial principle that there is no time without change.
 - 31 Galton, *Qualitative Spatial Change*, 245.
 - 32 As the scholastic axiom goes, *generatio unius est corruptio alterius et corruptio unius est generatio alterius*. And as Aristotle puts it, "the passing-away [*phthoran*] of one thing is the coming-to-be [*genesin*] of another thing, and the coming-to-be of one thing is the passing-away of another thing": *De Generatione et Corruptione* I.3, 318a25; translation from *Loeb* edition.

- 33 I discuss the problem of individuation in “Hylomorphism and Individuation,” in *Mind, Metaphysics, and Value in the Thomistic and Analytical Traditions*, J. Haldane, ed. (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 125–42.
- 34 *Physics* VI.6, 237a12–a16.
- 35 *Physics* VI.6, 237b2–b9.
- 36 *Physics* VI.10, 241a27–a30.
- 37 R. Sorabji, “Aristotle on the Instant of Change,” in *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 3, J. Barnes, M. Schofield and R. Sorabji, eds. (London: Duckworth, 1979), 159–77.
- 38 Sorabji, *Articles on Aristotle*, 161.

Chapter Seven

Aquinas's Teleological Libertarianism

John J. Davenport

1. Introduction

It has long been observed by scholars that free will on Aquinas's account is incompatible with natural necessitation (or causal determinism), since he holds that nothing outside the agent's will itself can be an efficient cause of his volitions.¹ If any bodily or mental movement is *efficiently* caused by forces external to the will, then that movement is not a "volition" at all. Aquinas defends Augustine's doctrine that the will's internal act (deciding or voluntarily withholding from decision) cannot be necessitated or compelled, even by God (*ST* I–II q. 6, a. 4). Aquinas does, however, allow *final* causes to act as sufficient conditions for volitions: he holds that the human will has a built-in and inalienable intrinsic desire for perfect beatitude (even without understanding it), which orients it towards goodness in general and which serves as its final cause. Thus unlike Duns Scotus who held that our will could choose to act for the sake of a final end that is independent of perfect happiness or eudaimonia, Aquinas was traditionally understood as denying the strict "libertarian" thesis that moral responsibility for any volition always entails being able to avoid that volition.² Eleonore Stump contrasts Aquinas's view with that of "Franciscans" who "suppose that free will had to be independent of the intellect as well as of external causal influence."³ Moreover Aquinas's Dominican followers famously clashed with certain Jesuits over his conception of providence, including his thesis that God co-causes all actions that are (in contemporary lingo) also agent-caused by the human will, or by any similar secondary (created) causal power.⁴

On this latter question of providence and human liberty, I would follow Hugh McCann's argument that Aquinas takes divine co-causation of our choices to be compatible with our exercising real libertarian freedom (in my strict sense) in making these choices.⁵ For Aquinas clearly insists that God's providential design, as an "exterior mover" of the human will, preserves the contingency of its choices:

Since therefore the will is an active principle that is not determined to one thing, but having an indifferent relation to many things, God so moves it that He does not determine it of necessity to one thing, but its movement remains contingent and not necessary, except in those things to which it is moved naturally [that is, its natural end] (*ST* I–II, q. 10, a. 4).

The human freedom with which divine providence is said to be compatible here is clearly *libertarian* in the strict (alternative-possibilities) sense.⁶ The same point is also made in *De Malo*: “God indeed inevitably moves the will because of the efficacy of his causal power, which cannot fail. But because the nature of the will so moved is indifferently disposed to different things, no necessity results, and freedom abides” (*QDM*, q. 6, a. 1, rep. 3).⁷ Moreover Aquinas gives an interesting argument that the divine will itself enjoys libertarian freedom, except with respect to its natural end or proper object:

God wills the being of His own goodness necessarily, even as we will our own happiness necessarily But God wills things other than Himself in so far as they are ordered to His own goodness as their end. Now in willing an end we do not necessarily will things that conduce to it unless they are such that the end cannot be attained without them ... Hence, since the goodness of God is perfect and can exist without other things ... it follows that for Him to will other things than Himself is not absolutely necessary. (*ST I*, q. 19, a. 3)

Unless X is logically necessary or entailed by God’s essential love of his own being and goodness, then God can will otherwise than X. But no creative act is logically necessary in itself or necessary as a means to God’s last end. Thus God’s self-sufficiency gives him liberty with respect to creative acts. This view is repeated in Aquinas’s treatise on the power of God, where he writes that “God absolutely can do otherwise than he has done.”⁸ For, “though God is unchangeable, his will is not confined to one issue as regards things to be done: hence he has free-will (*liberum arbitrium*).”⁹

Like William Rowe, I am not convinced that providential control of human choices is really compatible with libertarian freedom in the way Aquinas holds.¹⁰ But I will simply set aside this question,¹¹ since my thesis is only that, at the level of natural reason, Aquinas defends a strict libertarian conception of *moral freedom* (my rigid designator for whatever kind of freedom is required for moral responsibility). Although Aquinas admits the existence of teleologically determined motives, he does not think that we are responsible for them. Rather, he only holds us responsible for volitions that we could voluntarily have avoided, either by forming no volition or forming a different volition, now or in the past.

To make this thesis sharper, I will argue that Aquinas seems to accept an indirect or *tracing* version of libertarianism (TL)¹² according to which:

If a human person S is responsible for some act of will A (such as a choice forming an intention, or an intentional refusal to choose) in circumstances C, then at least one of the following holds:

- (1) S could have willed otherwise than A in C,
- or
- (2) S could have willed otherwise in past choice(s) in ways that would have made options other than A accessible in C.

On this picture, our control over those items for which we are responsible always *ultimately* involves the liberty to have avoided those items. The second option (2) allows that someone can be responsible for an act that they could not avoid choosing in the circumstances, given their acquired *character* – but this is only because in the past, they *could* have used their liberty to do otherwise in ways that would have led to a different character. This is what John Jenkins means when he says that Aquinas holds a “diachronic” rather than a “synchronic” view of the “free voluntary choice” necessary for moral responsibility: even if someone’s character now determines how options appear to him and thus determines his choice, he could have acted differently in the past in ways that would predictably have led to a different set of habits and way of seeing things.¹³

Stump emphasizes that according to Aquinas, “the redeemed in heaven, who no longer have the ability to will evil” still have the freedom or self-determining power necessary for moral responsibility: they are praiseworthy for willing the good.¹⁴ But this case is not decisive against a strict libertarian interpretation of Aquinas.¹⁵ For in their past, the redeemed could have chosen otherwise than they actually did and thus prevented their redemption, and this is essential to their present responsibility for their enduring good will. The same point would also apply to reprobate wills. These cases are covered by the tracing principle in TL.

I will consider other potential counterexamples along the way, but given the complexity of Aquinas’s moral psychology, I will only try to show that principle TL fits with the main elements of his account of the will and its relation to the intellect. Moreover I will focus mainly on the discussions of free will in the *Summa Theologiae*, in which Aquinas’s mature picture combines classical teleology with a form of libertarian freedom that is sufficient to allow for an Augustinian free will theodicy with respect to human evil.

2. Teleologically Limited Libertarianism in Aquinas’s Account of Voluntary Acts

Aquinas is certainly not an existential libertarian, because his eudaimonism requires that “man must of necessity, desire all, whatsoever he desires, for the last end” of happiness (*ST* I–II, q. 1, a. 6).¹⁶ This rules out libertarian alternatives at the level of our ultimate motive(s): all choices, including sinful ones, occur under the teleological ordering of the will to its natural last end, and all concern some real or apparent means to that last end. For the same reason, God cannot will anything evil: “For every will must needs have an end which it wills naturally, the contrary of which it cannot will: thus man naturally desires to be happy and cannot wish to be unhappy.”¹⁷

For both God and human beings, Aquinas famously argues that this teleological limit on liberty does not render their actions *involuntary*. In his first article on the will in *Summa Theologiae*, the first part, Aquinas distinguishes necessity imposed by an agent through *coercion* from the metaphysical necessity of a natural end: although the former involves the “violent” interruption of the will’s inclination, the

latter does not. On the basis of this distinction, he argues by analogy that just as “the intellect of necessity adheres to first principles, the will must of necessity adhere to the last end, which is happiness” (*ST I*, q. 83, a. 1). The teleological necessity of this embracing goal does not make the will’s pursuit of it involuntary, because it is *internal* to the will’s nature and essential to its capacity for any other act. But there are different levels of voluntariness in Aquinas’s theory.

2(a) *Moral Freedom as a Subset of the Voluntary*

To understand this, we need to have a basic grasp of the much-discussed distinctions that Aquinas makes in his explanation of intentional action:

- 1 Most broadly, the principle of act or movement can be either *inside* (“intrinsic” to) or *outside* (“extrinsic” to) the agent moved. This distinction applies even to inanimate objects, such as stones (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 1).
- 2 Those beings moved by an intrinsic principle, some are “said to move themselves,” that is, to act *voluntarily*, while others are not. While in both cases, the intrinsic principles involve final causes or cause movements *towards* an end, only those agents moving *for* an end count as “self-moving.” Voluntary movement thus requires not only causation by an internal principle, but more specifically the causal efficacy of an internal *representation* of the end involved in that principle: “in order for a thing to be done for an end, some knowledge of the end is necessary” (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 1). This includes the kind of sensual representation of goods to be pursued that is possible for many non-human animals.¹⁸ Irrational animals move towards “an apprehended end,” although they do not “move themselves to an end” in the same strong sense as rational creatures using “free judgment, which is a power of the will and reason” (*ST I–II*, q. 1, a. 2).
- 3 Although non-human animals are capable of voluntary action, since they can apprehend “the thing which is the end,” using “their senses and their natural estimative power,” they cannot know it “under the aspect of end” or reflect on alternative “means to that end.” For “such knowledge belongs to none but the rational creature” (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 2). David Gallagher confirms this reading: “Human agents ... enjoy the fullest sort of voluntariness (*voluntarium secundum rationem perfectum*) because they not only apprehend the end at which they aim ... but also apprehend it as an end.”¹⁹ Only this rational subset of self-movement – or “perfect voluntary” action – involves *libertarian freedom*: both consciously apprehending the end, and understanding it as his goal, “a man can, from deliberating about the end and the means thereto, be moved, or not, to gain that end” (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 2). Liberty is clearly linked here to the reflective powers of practical reason: for in itself, “deliberating reason is indifferently disposed to opposite things [that is, options],” which is why “the will can be inclined to either” (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 2, rep. 2). As Daniel Westberg summarizes, human agents are “able, by deliberation, to move or not move towards an end.”²⁰

It is only this third kind of movement by an intrinsic principle, which is not only voluntary but also free in the libertarian sense, that is subject to moral judgment. Thus “irrational animals” are not subject to praise and blame, because they lack this capacity for “perfect voluntary” action (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 2, rep. 3). This clearly suggests that Aquinas holds a libertarian conception of the freedom required for moral responsibility.

2(b) *Voluntary Inaction and Two Levels of Alternative*

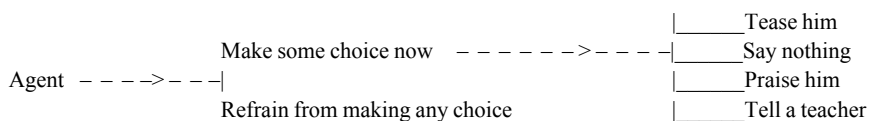
Such a strict libertarian requirement also seems to underlie Aquinas's analysis of responsibility for omissions. Aquinas insists that the absence of action or volition can sometimes be perfectly voluntary, because the agent deliberately passes up alternatives to these states: “Now we are masters in respect of to act and not to act, to will and not to will. Therefore just as to act and to will are voluntary, so also are not to act and not to will” (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 3). To hold someone responsible for *not* acting in some required way implies that she could have acted, or at least tried to act, this way. For example, if the helmsman was able to steer the ship, and failed to do so, then he is responsible for its sinking (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 3). Aquinas understands the distinction between actively *omitting* to steer – that is, forming and following the intention to keep one's hands off the tiller – and *failing* to steer:

the will by willing and acting is able, and sometimes ought, to hinder not-willing and not-acting; this not-willing and not-acting is imputed to, as though proceeding from, the will. And thus it is that we can have the voluntary without an act; sometimes without outward act, but with an interior act; for instance when one wills not to act; and sometimes without even an interior act, as when one does not will to act (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 3).

Aquinas sees that the absence of the interior act (failing to form any definite intention, even a negative one) can either happen to us involuntarily or can occur voluntarily/actively (*ST I–II*, q. 6, a. 3, rep. 2). In the latter case we might say that the agent actively *withholds* from making any decision, or puts off the formation of any intention, or voluntarily remains neutral, when *he could have done otherwise* (that is, by intending to act, or not to act, in some more specific way). This is quite different from involuntarily failing to decide anything because, say, one is shot just as one is starting to consider the question of how to respond to some situation. In the latter case the agent is not responsible on Aquinas's account because the relevant alternative to the state of no-decision are not accessible to her. But in many cases (for example, common negligence), these alternatives are accessible, and this is precisely what makes failure to will imputable to the agent.

This analysis seems to be the source of Aquinas's later distinction between two levels of alternatives in human agency. The will, like other powers of the soul, is “in potentiality to different things in two ways: first, with regard to acting and not acting; secondly, with regard to this or that action” (*ST I–II*, q. 9, a. 1). Logically prior to the range of particular positive options, we have the more fundamental alternative of engaging the power of choice or not engaging it (voluntarily failing to

choose any concrete option). For example, consider a middle schooler who is tempted to by a friend to tease a poor student for his bad clothes. Her two levels of options could be displayed as follows:



In this model, saying nothing could be described (and intended as) a way of explicitly omitting to tease or refusing to give in to the friend. Although it can look outwardly like inaction, it is not. Thus it is quite distinct from intentionally hanging in indecision or trying to ignore the whole dilemma. Refraining from making any choice is not the same as a more concrete omission.

Eleonore Stump provides a helpful summary of this point in Aquinas's theory:

The will is similarly moved in two ways. In one way, it is moved to the exercise of its act; that is, it is moved to will rather than not to will. In another way, it is moved to will this particular thing rather than some other. There is no object of the will which can move the will necessarily in the first way, because it is always in a person's power not to think of that object and consequently not to will it ...²¹

This helps to explain how a human agent retains the morally relevant alternative of voluntary non-willing even in cases where all action-options but one would seem highly irrational to her. The option of voluntarily refraining from choosing anything definite is available even when faced with an option that is good no matter how one considers it, because the will can always try to move the intellect to ignore it.²² Indeed, one kind of *akrasia* seems to consist precisely in this: holding back from doing the obvious best, from willing the only act that makes any sense in one's circumstances.

Robert Pasnau, who defends a compatibilist reading of Aquinas, notes that Aquinas makes the same distinction between the exercise and determination of the will's act in *De Malo* 6. Yet he resists the idea that at the first level, "the will derives a certain marginal freedom from the capacity to refrain from making any choice at all." He says that "this would be a poor sort of freedom indeed," and would not give the will any power to act positively against reason.²³ I make two points in response. Firstly, even though this negative liberty not to choose does not by itself give the will much positive control, it does indicate the intended libertarian character of Aquinas's account, and also implies a real distinction between will and intellect. Secondly, Pasnau is right that we have to look for positive control in the will's relation to intellect.

2(c) Implications

If I am correct that Aquinas endorses a libertarian conception of moral freedom, then we are *not responsible* for pursuing happiness in the most universal sense (as

our formal *telos*), even though this final cause does no violence to the will, and being moved by this embracing motive even counts as voluntary in a sense short of perfect voluntariness.²⁴ Willing its formal *telos* would not count as a free act of the will, but rather as an imperfect voluntary condition of all free acts. For Aquinas holds that the exercise of libertarian freedom depends on ontologically prior conditions, including the necessary will to infinite or perfect happiness. Although our natural desire for happiness is “not subject to free-will [*liberio arbitri*]” (*ST* I, q. 83, a. 2), this teleological limit *enables* liberty in the choice of particular actions. For although we do not exercise liberty in willing our own happiness or “good in general” (*ST* I–II, q. 9, a. 1), our desire for our last end provides *one* of the two main conditions of moral freedom, the other being ultimate libertarian control (as defined by TL above). Although the principle by which the rational agent moves herself *efficiently* in making choices must be internal to her agency (so that she, rather than any other material force acting on her, is the efficient cause of her choice), this principle still requires a motivating *telos* (or *final* cause) beyond the will itself:

... although it is essential to a voluntary act that its principle be within the agent, nevertheless it is not contrary to the nature of the voluntary act that this intrinsic principle be caused or moved by an extrinsic principle: because it is not essential to a voluntary act that its intrinsic principle be a first principle. (*ST* I–II, q. 6, a. 1, rep. 1)²⁵

In other words, the internal (efficient) cause of voluntary acts (including choices) is always also dependent on a more fundamental extrinsic principle: deliberative “counsel” about means depends on our implanted will to our last end to move the will to voluntary acts (*ST* I–II, q. 9, a. 2). This line of reasoning concludes with the argument that all human willing originates through a “chain” of motivations proceeding from the intrinsic, natural orientation of the will to the “universal good” (*ST* I–II, q. 9, a. 6). Since the universal good is an aspect of God, and since God is also the creator of this intrinsic nature in the will, the penultimate intrinsic principle *internal* to the will requires the ultimate extrinsic principle, both as its origin and intended content.

Aquinas concludes this article with an Augustinian objection concerning the problem of evil: “God is not cause of other than good things” and thus “If, therefore, man’s will were moved by God alone, it would never be moved to evil” (*ST* I–II, q. 9, a. 6, obj. 3). Aquinas responds that, although God moves the will as its universal object, “man determines himself by his reason to will *this or that*, which is the true or apparent good” (*ST* I–II, q. 9, a. 6, rep. 3, my emphasis). For Aquinas sees *liberum arbitrium* in the act of choice (*electio*) as important not only in *ethical* evaluation of human actions (considered in *ST* I–II, q. 6–7), but also in explaining the possibility of human evil. Thus in the Treatise on Man, in which Aquinas argues that some things are willed contingently, he cites Augustine’s dictum that “*it is the will by which we sin and live well*, and so the will extends to opposite things” (*ST* I, q. 82, a. 2). Now it is possible to hold that libertarian freedom is not essential to moral responsibility in general, though it is necessary for responsibility for wrong choices.²⁶ But this does not appear to be Aquinas’s

position, for he holds that God could not make us morally responsible beings without giving us the freedom to sin, if we so choose.

3. Two Aspects of the Will: A Necessary Formal *Telos* vs. Libertarian Mastery

3(a) Practical Contingency

For my strict libertarian interpretation, it is obviously crucial to understand why the teleological necessity of willing our own eudaimonia does not extend to other choices motivated ultimately by this embracing desire. To explain this, Aquinas invokes an analogy between the will's necessary first principle (that is, happiness as the highest end) and the first principles grasped by the intellect: just as reason extends beyond these first principles and can apply them to many different instances, the will extends to opposite or mutually inconsistent courses of action as means to happiness. His first article on the will uses this analogy to suggest that free choice is contingent in a way that the first principle of voluntary action is not. The third objection concerns the accepted doctrine that "by the will we are masters of our action" (*ST I*, q. 82, a. 1): this notion of "mastery" is a metaphor which Aquinas constantly employs, in many variations, for the power of *liberum arbitrium*. In his response, Aquinas says,

We are masters of our own actions by reason of being able to choose this or that. But choice regards not the end, but *the means to the end* as the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* iii. 9). Wherefore the desire of the ultimate end does not regard those actions of which we are masters. (*ST I*, q. 82, a. 1, rep. 3)

The phrase "this or that" is the same used in the reply to the objection about sin just considered (*ST I-II*, q. 9, a. 6, rep. 3): it means election of one option among a range of alternative possibilities. As David Gallagher notes, such *dominium* is one of the distinguishing features of intellectual appetite or will: "To have control or power over one's acts means that whenever one acts as one does, it would have been possible, had one so willed, to have acted differently or not at all."²⁷ The free part of the will is thus the part that can bring about different ways of life and plans of action as means to happiness, and these choices are contingent.

This distinction between teleologically necessary and contingent practical conclusions following from the will's first principle, sheds light on the intimate relation between the will and intellect in Aquinas's theory. The intellect moves the will by understanding the good which becomes the will's last end, but then, like a king "who aims at the common good of the whole kingdom," the will serves as a commander which directs the intellect and the other powers of the soul that "regard particular ends" (*ST I*, q. 82, a. 4). Accordingly Aquinas distinguishes two different parts or aspects of the will, one of which is the natural intellectual appetite for the highest good and the other of which determines more particular ends as means to

the last end. Just as the intellect is both a general apprehension “of universal being and truth” as well as a power for particular acts,

In like manner also the will may be considered in two ways: according to the common nature of its object – that is to say, as appetitive of the universal good – and as a determinate power of the soul having a determinate act (*ST I*, q. 82, a. 4, rep. 1).

Thus *free will* enters in at the second stage of willing in general: it is the “counsel” or free judgment concerning “particular operations” which are “contingent” (*ST I*, q. 83, a. 1). Thus it is the selection that the will performs among *particular* actions, plans, or projects as means which seems to endow free will with its alternative possibilities: as Aquinas says, “The proper act of free-will is choice [*electio*]. For we say that we have free-will because we can take one thing while refusing another; and this is to choose” (*ST I*, q. 83, a. 3). These two aspects of the will are also implied in Aquinas’s discussion of voluntariness, as we saw: there free choice is the *second* voluntary act that follows the will’s first or “immediate” act of willing happiness or the agent’s good. This first voluntary act of the will is moved by the principle of the last end. At this point, the will is “moved to the end absolutely” and without liberty (*ST I–II*, q. 8, a. 3), but beyond this point, it is not necessarily determined in the choice of means, because it has different ways of specifying its action. It is because there are apparently many ways of realizing happiness that this contingency arises.

3(b) Formal Telos, Material Telos, Ignorance and Finitude

To understand this, it is vital to realize that the last end which we all will with teleological necessity, which I call our *formal telos*, is a general idea of infinite happiness, a shadowy outline of perfect eudaimonia – not a concrete conception of what such fulfillment of all desire consists in, including its necessary conditions (which we may call a “material” conception of the highest good, or *material telos*). Aquinas explicitly distinguishes these formal and material senses of “ultimate end” in the seventh article of the Treatise on Happiness (*ST I–II*, q. 1, a. 7). In particular, he says that those who sin “turn away from that in which the ultimate end is truly found, but they still intend an ultimate end, which they mistakenly seek in other things” (*ST I–II*, q. 1, a. 7, rep. 1). Human beings do not necessarily understand that their perfect happiness can be achieved only through union with God in the beatific vision of the divine essence (*ST I–II*, q. 3, a. 8), or what the moral preconditions of this are. “Happiness” *per se* is not our material *telos*, because it is derivative: it consists in achieving or enjoying other first-order good(s) (*ST I–II*, q. 3, a. 1, rep. 2); it is simply the aggregation of all goods necessary for a life lacking nothing (*ST I–II*, q. 3, a. 2, rep. 2). Our formal *telos* is thus sufficiently abstract that anything “good” or having any kind of positive value can be willed under its aspect (*ST I–II*, q. 1, a. 6).

This ignorance of the true fulfillment-conditions of our ultimate desire, or of what perfect happiness consists in, explains why conditions or “means” that are

causally necessary to the beatific vision are not also teleologically necessary for our will. Aquinas recognizes that sometimes the means follows necessarily in a practical syllogism from a given end: “necessity of end is not repugnant to the will, when the end cannot be attained except in one way: thus from the will to cross the sea arises in the will the necessity to wish for a ship” (*ST I*, q. 82, a. 1). In this case, the will’s liberty remains only at the level of the end, that is, in deciding not to cross the sea after all. But what, we might ask, if crossing the sea was the only conceivable means to some higher end, and which in turn was the only conceivable means to happiness itself? In Aquinas’s opinion, there is virtually never such a demonstratively evident deduction from the first practical principle of the will all the way to a specific action like boarding this ship here and now. For, just as some propositions are contingent, and do not follow *necessarily* from first principles, for the will, “there are certain individual goods which have not a necessary connection with happiness, because without them a man can be happy” (*ST I*, q. 82, a. 2). We can desire and choose many things that are not essential to achieving our true end, including some that are really counterproductive.

Certainly, the transcendent good for human beings does have some requirements that no enlightened human agent could fail to will. In the same article, Aquinas says:

But there are some things which have a necessary connection to happiness, by means of which man adheres to God, in whom alone true happiness consists. Nevertheless, until through certitude of the Divine Vision the necessity of such connection be shown, the will does not adhere to God of necessity, nor to the things which are of God (*ST I* q. 82, a. 2).

Thus Westberg says, “the will cannot be said to incline necessarily even to God, or to divine things.”²⁸ The will only has opposite possibilities with respect to some things necessary for happiness, such as the virtues, because the intellect does not necessarily apprehend that the ultimate good of happiness can only be found in God through a virtuous life. When the intellect does apprehend this, then the will may be teleologically determined at least this far down the chain of means-to-ends. Yet this is not a *universal* teleological necessity that negates responsibility, because the intellect attains such a clear moral insight in part because of past choices in which the will could have chosen otherwise. Thus such a person is responsible for willing to remain virtuous, even if she cannot now do otherwise, because of past exercises of strict libertarian freedom (as per the tracing condition in TL).²⁹

Yet the underdeterminacy of means to true happiness (our material *telos*), which is the epistemic precondition of libertarian freedom in the will, is not simply a function of ignorance that is *overcomeable* by a long pattern of right willing against other options. It also arises from a universal metaphysical condition that I will call “finitude.” Finitude affects human liberty by placing limits on epistemic enlightenment, among them that the true nature of our material *telos* transcends any complete comprehension. As Jenkins says,

Since an intellectual apprehension of God's essence is beyond us in this life, however, the will is not determined to will perfect beatitude. And regarding any other end which it can will as partially realizing this beatitude, such an end does not perfectly fulfill the formality under which it is willed.... Thus, one can consider it as something either to be willed or not.³⁰

Because of our finitude, no human life is long enough to explore every wonder, or savor every good, or engage in every worthwhile practice; nor can any combination of projects, relationships, endeavors or practices in a single life – or even shared with others in ongoing community – constitute the infinite good: they are all imperfect approximations. What we really desire is a good that transcends all such finite or “participated” goods, an unlimited goodness from which all other goods come (*ST* I–II, q. 2, a. 8).³¹ Because the “capacity of the will regards the universal and perfect good,” even without understanding its true nature, this capacity is “not subjected to any individual good” (*ST* I, q. 82, a. 2, rep. 2). Similarly, Aquinas writes: “The will can tend to nothing except under the aspect of the good. But because the good is of many kinds, for this reason the will is not necessarily determined to one” (*ST* I, q. 82, a. 2, rep. 1). Aquinas is even clearer on this point in *De Malo*: “there are many ways to achieve happiness. And so human beings, although they will happiness, do not necessarily will any of the things leading to happiness” (*QDM*, q. 6, a. 1, rep. 9). These passages suggest that there may be several means that are *genuinely* – not deceptively – valid ways to approach happiness to the degree possible in one's earthly circumstances. If so, then even a fully enlightened will does not have to turn to any one of them as a teleologically necessary means.

4. The Compatibilist Challenge and Libertarian Replies

These passages provide strong reasons for understanding the “contingency” that Aquinas attributes to free judgment and choice as a form of what Robert Pasnau calls a “dual power on the part of the will: the power, in a given situation, to make either one choice or the opposite.”³² Thus Westberg says that for Aquinas, nothing is presented in this life “as absolutely good with no qualification, but as something pluriform and complex, which does not necessarily determine the will.”³³ Thus the “indeterminacy about every particular good specified by reasoning ... is the source of possible error, or evil, and also of freedom.”³⁴ Similarly David Gallagher argues that for Aquinas, the will is the faculty that moves other powers of the human person voluntarily; it is “that faculty by which actions are within the control of the agent.”³⁵ And the kind of control necessary for moral responsibility is not simply the ability to respond to reasons (including moral reasons) for action;³⁶ rather, it is libertarian control, applying to “those acts which, when one does them, one could do differently or even not at all.”³⁷

Yet despite this recent convergence on a strict libertarian reading, there is hardly consensus. Stump argues that Aquinas rejects strict liberty as a requirement for moral responsibility, and that he emphasizes the ability to choose otherwise only

because it is often an “associated accident” of moral responsibility.³⁸ Pasnau argues that when Aquinas says the will is not determined because it “can” choose “this or that,” he only means that unlike other animals, individual human beings can vary in their responses to similar circumstances.³⁹ It is compatible with this to say that we can never really do otherwise in the strict libertarian sense: “Given the entire state of the universe, including the individual’s higher-order beliefs and desires, a certain choice will inevitably follow.”⁴⁰

To understand why some interpreters reject a straightforwardly libertarian understanding of the will’s contingency in Aquinas, we can start with Norman Kretzmann’s observation that Aquinas appears to move away from his early view that the will is distinguished from sensitive appetites by its power of “determining its own inclination” (*QDV*, 22.4, ad. I) and to emphasize the will’s dependence on apprehended goods. As a result, “his more mature theory of the will can look like a version of compatibilism, acceptive of will’s being other-determined.”⁴¹ In particular, as Pasnau argues, it can seem “that the will is determined in its choices by the intellect, that intellect is determined by prior acts of will and sensation, that those prior acts of will and sensation are themselves determined, and so on . . . ,” presumably leading back to experiences in infancy and our innate desire for happiness.⁴² There is room to resist this suggestion. Every interpreter agrees that for Aquinas, willing is always informed by deliberative thought: as Gallagher says, “the will is not . . . pure spontaneity, a sort of wild card by which a person randomly determines himself to actions.”⁴³ But it need not follow that the reasons which *inform* the will must also *determine* the choice of one option over others.

4(a) *Strict Libertarian vs. “Franciscan” Freedom*

Thus the compatibilist challenge really requires the additional (more controversial) premise that for Aquinas, the will can only choose the option that intellect judges to be best, all things considered.⁴⁴ Ignoring questions about *akrasia*, let us accept this for the sake of argument.⁴⁵ Then when S’s will chooses A at time T, she can choose B at T instead only if she judges B to be better than A. This looks like a merely *conditional* ability to do otherwise, similar to the “freedom” that Hume says I enjoy when I could do B rather than A *if* I wanted B more than A (even though I’m not empowered to bring about that I want B more than A). Like Hume, Aquinas now appears to reject the strict libertarian doctrine that “one could have done otherwise in exactly the same set of circumstances.”⁴⁶ So Stump dissociates Aquinas from “some medieval” and contemporary libertarians who hold that,

... an act of will is free only in case the agent could have performed a different act of will in exactly the same circumstances with exactly the same set of beliefs and desires. For such libertarians, the alternative possibilities available to the will need to be available to the will simultaneously, with the agent in the same state of mind. On this way of thinking about free will, the will needs to be unconstrained not only by causal influences outside the will; it needs to be unconstrained even by the agent’s intellect.⁴⁷

On the contrary, I think two different kinds of freedom are being conflated here. We may define strict libertarian freedom as:

- (L) a *power* to bring about any one of a plural range of alternative elements (decisions, intentions, acts, and so on) *starting from* the same comprehensive set of circumstances (including the agent's past, physical conditions, and psychological states).⁴⁸

But this is clearly *not* identical with an even stronger kind of liberty consisting in

- (F) a power to bring about alternative futures that *hold constant* certain psychological states, such as the agent's practical judgments about the value of the alternatives that he can cause.

Following Stump, I label the latter "F" for "Franciscan" liberty. Enjoying F-freedom entails enjoying L, but enjoying L does not entail enjoying F. For it might be the case that in all except one of the alternative futures that agent S is able to bring about in circumstances C, his practical judgments will differ from their state in C. Aquinas clearly rejects F-freedom, which makes the will independent of the practical intellect – allowing it to do otherwise even *holding constant* all the agent's intellectual states. But L-freedom need not have this implication; thus it remains open to take Aquinas as holding that responsibility ultimately depends on L-freedom. On this reading, Aquinas holds that we are subject to praise and blame because in many cases, *starting* from a given intellectual state favoring A, the agent *can* (in the L-sense) choose either A or B: for, *in that state*, he has the power to bring about the necessary change in his intellectual state simultaneous with electing B over A. Thus the power to actualize any one of plural possible futures that branch at time T, starting from the same history up to T, rests less in the will than in the *intellect* itself for Aquinas.

4(b) Teleological Determinism or Arbitrariness?

At this point, the skeptic will rightly ask how practical intellect can *control* changes in its own judgments in the act of choosing otherwise than it is presently inclined to. After all, we often do face choices in which only one option has much apparent value, or in which certain means seem obviously to be necessary to ends we already have. Might this imply that in many cases, no alternative but one is really choosable or volitionally possible?⁴⁹ This misgiving can be deepened if we look more closely at Aquinas's explication of free choice. In trying to decide whether choice is an appetitive or apprehensive power, Aquinas acknowledges that the choice between options involves "a certain comparison of one thing to another, which belongs to the cognitive power" (ST I, q. 83, a. 3, obj. 3). In explaining this, he argues that, "On the part of the cognitive power, counsel is required, by which we judge one thing to be preferred to another; and on the part of the appetitive power, it is required that the appetite should accept the judgment of counsel" (ST I, q. 83, a. 3). In other words, a free choice is a movement of the appetite to something

determinate judged *better* than other options. But if one determinate means is *objectively* better than another for the same end, then the will can choose either means only because (1) its counsel can err and judge the worse alternative to be better, or (2) because it can reject its own counsel and choose the worse option *qua* worse, or (3) the will can in practice only choose the one which is better, if it wills anything positive at all. But Aquinas apparently rejects (2), and if counsel is well-functioning, then (1) is also ruled out. This would leave (3).

Does Aquinas hold, then, that a practical intellect with epistemic virtues will usually have only one judgment it can make? In the final article on free will in the *Treatise on Man*, Aquinas draws an analogy between the “appetitive powers” and the “apprehensive powers.”⁵⁰ Under apprehension, Aquinas distinguishes *intellect* by which “we understand first principles” and *reason* by which “we reason about conclusions, which are known from the principles.” These powers are said to correspond, respectively, to the will as a “simple appetite” for something desired in itself (the will to one’s natural last end) and to the choice of “means to the end” (*ST* I, q. 83, a. 4) – the two aspects of the will that we already distinguished. This analogy supports (3) above if one understands the movement from the general to the specific in reason as *deductive necessity*. If all conclusions are *inferred* in this way from first principles known *per se nota*, then the analogy would imply that the appetite arrives at its chosen action (as means) *necessarily* from the will’s last end.

Aquinas does not intend the analogy to be understood this way. As John Jenkins emphasizes in discussing faith as an act of will, “Aquinas says that only in cases of *scientia*, in the full apprehension of first principles or conclusions deduced from these, in cases in which there is a ‘manifest vision of the truth,’ is assent spontaneous and not voluntary.”⁵¹ Practical reason usually informs the will of actionable goods without any such demonstration that one option is certainly better than all others. But, Jenkins argues, this hardly makes its judgments arbitrary. For Aquinas, “perfect *scientia* is only of general and necessary truths, and is attained only after long inquiry and an extended process of intellectual habituation.” But one can have good reason for judgments that fall short of such Platonic *noesis*.⁵² Thus there is a wide range of potentially *warranted* judgments to which assent remains voluntary, which includes the realm of what I’ll call “practical *dianoia*.”

It is this kind of *dianoetic* determination that Aquinas has in mind when he argues that unlike a stone, which acts with no apprehension or judgment, or an animal which judges by natural instinct, the human will “judges that something should be avoided or sought” in a *contingent* way:

But because this judgment, in the case of some particular act, is not from a natural instinct, but from some act of comparison in the reason, therefore he acts from free judgment and retains the power of being inclined to various things. For reason in contingent matters may follow opposite courses, as we see in dialectic syllogisms and rhetorical arguments. Now the particular operations are contingent, and therefore in such matters the judgment of reason may follow opposite courses, and is not determinate to one (*ST* I, q. 83, a. 1).

This reference to the “opposite courses” of contingent reasoning suggest that Aquinas thinks there is some latitude open to *sound* free judgment concerning the best means to some given end.⁵³ As I argued, at the most general level, this is because of epistemic and practical finitude: (a) the true constitutive conditions of eudaimonia are not clearly understood, and (b) no particular set of life-choices are *metaphysically necessary* for human beings in the way that instinctive inclinations in an animal's nature are necessary for that animal. But this does not mean that finite practical judgment within these limits cannot be *better or worse*.⁵⁴ Practical deliberation remains analogical and dialectical, starting from premises that are less than *per se nota* truths. It also remains rhetorical, meaning that although real values in the objects influence her judgment, the agent can alter the way in which these value-options appear to her. Ultimately, then, it is the imperfect nature of all created being which explains liberty in rational appetite: “On this metaphysical point of the contingency of all being and the ambiguity of the good apart from God, Thomas grounds his profound doctrine of the radical freedom of free choice – of both reason and will.”⁵⁵

This conception of practical *dianoia* functions as Aquinas's answer to a familiar dilemma of libertarian theories of moral freedom: either the will's election of one option over others is entirely arbitrary and thus determined by chance (which is autonomy-undermining), or else it is determined by fixed forms of attractiveness discovered in the relevant options by the various experiences influencing the will. The latter certainly include goods appealing to the sensitive appetite, and its own habits (*ST* I–II, q. 9, a. 2), and this can feed the misleading impression of compatibilism in Aquinas. But while the will is ruled by rational cognition of goods, as Kretzmann emphasizes, this is a “politic” rather than “despotic” rule, and it leaves the will significant leeway in how it receives and responds to awareness and judgment of goods coming from other faculties.⁵⁶ In short, neither the value/attractiveness of options, nor the range of salient options, is fixed for rational appetite.

An early version of this view is given in *De Veritate*, where Aquinas holds that the human agent has power over its inclinations because it “has power over the judgment by which its inclination is determined.”⁵⁷ Gallagher argues that in both *De Veritate* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, this power arises from the intellect's second-order agency, or ability to reflect on its own judgments.⁵⁸ This idea is not rejected but rather modified and deepened in the *Summa Theologiae*, both in the Treatise on Man and in I–II. This later version contains insights that might aid in constructing a better libertarian account of how reasons of different kinds inform and shape, while still underdetermining, the agent-causation of one decision among several open to the agent.⁵⁹

5. Free Judgment: Sovereign/Creative Reason and Underdetermined Motives

Our goal in this section is to understand what happens inside the process of “free judgment”, on Aquinas's mature account. It is helpful to begin with Aquinas's

division of the will's different acts in *ST* I-II, where he explicitly denies that animals are capable of "choice" because their appetite is "determinate to that thing" they take in preference to other things (*ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 2, rep. 2). By contrast, the human act of choice (as one part of free-will) requires alternative possibilities:

I answer that, Since choice is the taking of one thing in preference to another, it must of necessity be in respect of several things that can be chosen. Consequently in those things which are altogether determinate to one there is no place for choice (*ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 2).

Whereas the "sensitive appetite is determinate to one particular thing", the will is capable of choice because it is "indeterminate in respect of particular goods" (*ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 2). But this does not yet rule out the compatibilist interpretation according to which these options exist only because the will can *be moved* in different ways by other external influences.

Yet as we saw, even if the will by itself lacks the power to bring about different internal acts at a given moment, it does not follow that the agent as a whole lacks it. As Aquinas divides the will's internal acts, choice is immediately preceded by the judgment of counsel. It is clear at least that the will's power to reach more than one choice is derived from a *prior indeterminacy* in this deliberation of counsel. As Eleonore Stump says, when alternative possibilities are available to the will, "they will be open to the agent only because she can be in a different intellectual state from the one she is in fact in. For Aquinas, alternative possibilities of the will are dependent on alternative possibilities of the intellect."⁶⁰ We see this in Aquinas's last article on choice, which says that, for any choice of means made by the will, it was possible for the will *not* to have chosen it; thus man has the power to "will this or that, and do this or that". But this dual ability arises in turn from the nature of the reasoning that occurs in counsel:

The reason of this is seated in the very power of reason. For the will can tend to whatever the reason can apprehend as good. ... Again, in all particular goods, the reason can consider an aspect of some good, and the lack of some good, which has the aspect of evil: and in this respect, it can apprehend any single one of such goods as to be chosen or to be avoided (*ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 6).

Because no particular finite good is perfect, reason can consider each in a more positive or more negative light by bringing new options or new ways of framing existing options into the comparison.

Yet at this level of practical intellect, "can judge otherwise" might again be construed in compatibilist fashion to mean that some *other factor* external to our agency controls whether our reason considers this or that aspect of the act-options or means that it has in view, according to which its judgment about the best option will vary. On this reading, the will can avoid willing some particular option *O* only because some external influence (sensation, prior habits, temptation by others, God's grace and so on) can cause a different option *P* to appear more attractive to it. So *the will's choosing an option other than P* is possible – but not because of the will's own intrinsic power to bring about different selections. This would not be

libertarian freedom, because these alternative states of our will would not derive their possibility *autonomously* from the powers that make us agents. But Aquinas's wording suggests that the power to shift its judgment belongs to reason itself: within limits arising from its circumstances, reason can "see what it wants to see" in the object or means under evaluation, thus rhetorically affecting its apprehension of the object.

Interestingly, Stump seems to endorse this reading in one place: "with a salient exception [that is, God's essence] no matter what object is presented to the intellect, it is open to the intellect to consider it under some description which makes it seem not good." She offers the useful illustration of a woman who has won some money intentionally avoiding an advertisement showing starving children in need of charitable aid, because she does not want anything to prevent her from spending this money on herself.⁶¹ So she avoids letting other pressing needs become salient, or finds some negative aspect in these options if they do occur to her. This is a good example of what I am calling a "rhetorical" process. It is not sheer rationalization (except in extreme cases), but it involves limited volitional warping of the intellect's practical object-field.

6. Comparative Judgment: Indefinite Gestalt-Shifting Extension to New Options

This idea that the agent (through the interaction of intellect and will) can bend her evaluation in favor of different options is supported in Aquinas's presentation of "free-will" in general in *ST I*. The "free judgment" of reason has real alternatives because of a complex set of factors. Here, as in his later discussion of choice in I–II, Aquinas resists the objection that "whatever is apprehended by the intellect moves the will ['intellectual appetite'] of necessity," just as the sensitive appetite is determined by its object (*ST I*, q. 82, a. 2, obj. 3). In reply, Aquinas again emphasizes the cognitive process of comparison:

The sensitive power does not compare different things with each other, as reason does ... reason is a power that compares several things together: therefore from several things the intellectual appetite – that is, the will – may be moved; but not of necessity from one thing (*ST I*, q. 82, a. 2, rep. 3).

Since this remark is made as a response to the objection that intellectual appetite is determined in a fashion analogous to sensitive appetite, it suggests that the difference lies in the way that sense and intellect apprehend their objects. The will is the intellect's appetite for the universal good (*ST I*, q. 82, a. 4), a good that always transcends the particular finite goods before it, giving the practical intellect the power to consider non-actual possibilities, alternatives not directly presented *in scene*. Thus comparative rational grasp of "several" objects intrinsically involves a freedom from univocal determination. The same assumption is operative in Aquinas's closely related definition of *liberum arbitrium* as "free judgment",

because this definition implicitly contrasts the contingency of the will or intellectual appetite with the instinctual reaction of the animal, whose “estimative” appetite *is* determined by its apprehended object: “For the sheep, seeing the wolf, judges it to be a thing shunned, from natural and not from free judgment, because it judges, not from reason, but from natural instinct” (ST I, q. 83, a. 1). By contrast, as we have seen, intellectual appetite can compare objects suggested by natural instinct and other influences with further possible objects of choice.

It may seem strange to think that the mere multiplicity of objects makes for any kind of freedom in value-judgment concerning which is choiceworthy. But the type of “comparison” that Aquinas has in mind only makes sense once we realize that the crucial difference between humans and animals is not merely that human intellectual appetite responds to a multiplicity of actually presented objects at once, while the animal appetite does not. As we already saw, the deliberative reason behind choice was able to reach *different* judgments about even a *single* presented option for action. The relevant difference from non-human animals lies in the relation of the intellectual appetite to the objects apprehended by the practical intellect. The apprehended objects do have an *effect* on the appetite in both humans and animals. But Aquinas’s response to the objection mentioned above (ST I, q. 82, a. 2, rep. 3) suggests that for human beings, even the entire *sum* of the ways in which the compared objects “move” the appetite – the *economy of motivations*, as we might call it – is not sufficient to *determine* the appetitive part of the will to a particular conclusion. For this sum can be altered by free association within the universals in terms of which the actually presented options are understood as instances. Thus in volitional appetite, universality is linked to freedom.⁶²

This crucial distinction between higher human and lower animal appetition is first thematized in a series of fascinating reflections on Avicenna’s five “interior sensitive powers” of the soul in Part I, q. 78. Aquinas argues that an animal receives and preserves “sensible forms” (or *species*) through proper sense, common sense and imagination (which “is as it were a storehouse of forms received through the senses”). Without the power to retain such sensible images, an animal could not be moved to seek something when it is absent (for example, food). But Aquinas distinguishes these purely sensible images from what I will call “pragmatic species”, which are apprehended or intended, but not through the senses alone. For example, Aquinas says, “the sheep runs away when it sees a wolf, not on account of its colour or shape, but as a natural enemy.” This apprehension of the wolf under the pragmatic *eidos* “natural enemy” is not possible through “exterior sense” (ST I, q. 78, a. 4). Hence it is the “estimative power” that allows animals to apprehend these “intensions which are not received through the senses”, for example, “that something is harmful or otherwise” (ST I, q. 78, a. 4).⁶³

This is directly relevant to Aquinas’s analysis of free will since, as we saw, it is precisely in contrast to automatic, instinctual motivation by this “estimative” judgment of animals that the free judgment is first defined. And this contrast is anticipated in the discussion of the interior apprehensive powers. With respect to the pragmatic “intensions”, that is, the species that are not received through the senses, Aquinas says humans and animals differ:

... for other animals perceive these intensions only by some natural instinct, while man perceives them by means of collation of ideas [*eidos*, forms, species]. Therefore the power which in other animals is called the natural estimative, in man is called the *cognitive*,⁶⁴ which by some sort of collation discovers these intensions. Wherefore it is called the *particular reason* ... for it compares individual intensions (*ST I*, q. 78, a. 4).

Here again, the human apprehension of a “pragmatic *eidos*” depends on a comparative judgment. But Aquinas's description does not suggest that the cognitive power *first* receives a plurality of fixed pragmatic *eidé* and *then* compares and contrasts them: rather, these different values (understood as good, pleasant, fitting, harmful and so on) seem to gel and get prioritized only *in* the collation itself. In other words, the overall judgment about this plurality is first discovered only *through* the very act of collation, or putting together. It is as if there is a plurality of *virtual* apprehensions for each part of the collation, underlying the final apprehension of value in the whole collation, which depends on the *active* synthetic creativity of the agent in forming what we could call a *comparative practical manifold*.⁶⁵ For human beings, unlike other animals, the apprehension of distinct particular values relevant to action supervenes on an active synthesis of a comparative manifold of such values: they are never apprehended in absolute isolation.⁶⁶ And since their synthesis is a (unique) kind of activity of the agent, the agent has some control over the way that his set of options is structured, and thus over how he apprehends particular options as overall better or worse. This synthetic activity is aided by our powers of remembering such pragmatic *eidé*, which also extend beyond that of other animals: whereas they have a “sudden recollection” of an estimative species as determined by instinct, we can intentionally seek out a recollection of our past particular practical judgments, a power Aquinas calls “reminiscence” (*ST I*, q. 78, a. 4). This is one of several ways in which our will can affect how practical reason comparatively assesses its actionable options.

In addition, while animals and humans share the same sensation of the “extrinsic sensible,” they differ with respect to the *interior* power of imagination. In animals, imagination only retains the form or species received by the senses, but there is also a higher operation of imagination that “is not to be found in animals other than man.” This is Avicenna's “fifth power, which combines and divides imaginary forms” as when “gold” and “mountain” are combined to yield the famous Golden Mountain (*ST I*, q. 78, a. 4). Since Aquinas includes this recombinatorial activity within human imagination, he only arrives at “four interior powers of the sensitive part”, that is, “the common sense, the imagination, the estimative, and the memorative” (*ST I*, q. 78, a. 4). At this point, a table aligning analogous animal and human powers (with human beings enjoying both sets) may be helpful.

In the table on page 138, all the faculties in the right column have a kind of *plastic* or flexible relation to their objects or *eidé* that their sub-human animal analogs lack. While animal imagination is only a passive power that apprehends and stores up fixed sensible species for automatic association and retrieval when cued, human imagination extends beyond these passive functions to a more active or creative operation: it can intentionally synthesize combinations that represent

*Sub-human animal powers**Distinctive human powers*

Common sense (receives species from the five senses)

—

Imagination (retains and recalls creatively sensible forms)

Human imagination (retains, recalls and recombines sensible forms to represent these possibilities)

Estimation (receives value-reasoning reasoning forms or practical species)

Cogitation, or free judgment (practical comparing particular actionable goods)

Memoration (retains and recalls these practical eidé)

Reminiscence (actively or intentionally recalls practical eidé to aid the process of arriving at contingent practical judgements)

non-actual possibilities.⁶⁷ Thus the analogy between the active synthetic imagination of new sensible forms and the “comparative” apprehension of free judgment, which “collates” motivating forms of value (practical eidé), is especially significant. For it suggests that this cognitive process of comparison/collation could be similarly creative, bringing in new possible *motivating* apprehensions (or practical eidé). This would explain why human comparative judgment is not deterministic, while the sheep’s estimative judgment is. Thus the comparative act of choice would not be determined to a single act-as-means by the “economy of motivations” coming from the raw inputs presented to it. It would have some discretion to *enrich* (or to simplify or distort) this set of options and thus determine *how* it is ultimately moved by the whole altered set or collation.

7. The Liberty to Resist Habits

This interpretation of Question 78 above explains why Aquinas thinks that human practical reasoning can move *beyond* those objects or goods that are initially most salient in the circumstances (because of their appeal to the senses, or other immediate influences), and alter their practical appeal by juxtaposing them with an indefinitely extendable list of further possible choice-objects as pursuable goods. This is important, because Aquinas also emphasizes that habits and passions of the sensitive appetite can move the will by conditioning how options appear to us: “that seems good to a man when angered, that does not seem good when he is calm” (*ST* II–I, q. 9, a. 2). But free judgment can in principle overcome these influences by rhetorical revaluation of its option, for example, via imagining new options *other* than those first presented to it by the senses, habits, communal expectations, the exhortation of significant others, and so on, next to which these can be viewed differently. Thus even powerful influences, like habits of our sensible appetite, are

able to be resisted (though not easily). Responding to the objection that nature determines the dispositions which make us choose one "particular end" over others, Aquinas admits that from corporeally conditioned dispositions and passions, "a man is inclined to choose or reject something." But he adds that these dispositions which affect choice are "subject to the judgment of reason ... as it is in our power either to acquire them, or to reject them" (*ST I*, q. 83, a. 1, rep. 5).⁶⁸

As this passage indicates, states or dispositions of character are actually brought under libertarian control in two ways for Aquinas. Firstly, they are partially brought about by past choices in which we could have done otherwise (the tracing condition). Secondly, with ongoing effort, over time the will can alter them.⁶⁹ As Jenkins puts it, "One can, through conscious effort, have some immediate control over what appears good and thus act against one's character." As we have seen, "This seems to be possible, according to Aquinas, through exercising some control over the phantasmata with which the intellect is presented."⁷⁰ So it seems unlikely that Aquinas would admit that choosing a particular option can ever be volitionally *necessary* in Frankfurt's sense.⁷¹ Within this life, a habit could at most become *almost* impossible to resist.

This "politic" sovereignty of reason and will over the habits that incline choice, but which are not sufficient to determine it, is further reflected in the argument that free will *in itself* is a capacity or potential neutral with respect to the habits. While the habits, according to Aristotle, make us "well or ill disposed with regard to the actions and passions", Aquinas asserts that "the free will is indifferent to good or evil choice: wherefore it is impossible for free will to be a habit. Therefore it is a power" (*ST I*, q. 83, a. 2). The contrast is further enhanced in the response to the second objection (which concerns Bernard's definition of free will). Aquinas says "by a power man is, as it were, empowered to do the action, and by the habit he is apt to act well or ill" (*ST I*, q. 83, a. 2, rep. 2). This distinction between *empowerment to do* and *aptness to do* implies that free will, as a power, is actually able to bring about different alternative intentions, although some will always be easier to bring about than others. For this bare ability does not include the full motivational *strength* of an acquired aptitude: while rational appetite is *in principle* empowered to overrule habits and passions and to choose an alternative means contrary to the inclinations they give, in practice this will be more or less *difficult*, depending on how deeply the habits are ingrained.

More generally, these points shed light on Aquinas's argument in Question 81 (to which q. 83, a. 1 refers back explicitly) that the sensitive appetite obeys "reason" and the will. Although the sensible appetite is moved in part by external sensation, Aquinas suggests that reason rules the two parts of the sensitive appetite – the "irascible" and the "concupiscible" – by a "politic power" which guides and controls subjects capable of resisting it to a degree (*ST I*, q. 81, a. 3, rep. 2). This model of "political" rather than coercive control would seem particularly appropriate for the relation of reason to the particular goods first given to free judgment as options, if free will works as my interpretation suggests. The free will is moved by the appeals with a set of options given by its total external and internal circumstances (so it is not a "despotic" power), but practical reason still exercises

some creative control in the free judgment that finally *gives* one option a greater apparent value than the others. It exercises this control by enlarging this given set of options, or directing more attention to ones little considered before or reconsidering some of them from new angles – all ways of altering the practical *gestalt* formed by this volitionally salient set of options.

Aquinas's argument in this Question confirms that it is a freedom for alternatives within reason itself that makes the comparative act of choice creative. As we saw, "in other animals the sensitive appetite is naturally moved by the estimative power," in man it is moved by a "cogitative power" or "particular reason", which performs its comparisons under the guidance of "universal reason" (*ST I*, q. 81, a. 3). The intellectual appetite is distinct from the sensitive appetite just because "the intellectual appetite, though it tends to individual things which exist outside the soul, yet tends to them as standing under the universal," which explains how it can desire immaterial goods such as knowledge and virtue (*ST I*, q. 80, a. 2, rep. 2). The practical *eidos* of any particular object of choice is always qualified as an instance of some *universal* type (or types) of goodness. This is what makes it possible to bring new instances into the collation, as an example from *De Malo* illustrates. Although real objects are forms individuated by matter, in intellectual appetite,

... the understood form is universal and includes many individual things. And so since actualities regard singular things, and none of them exhausts the potentiality of the universal, inclinations of the will remain indeterminately disposed to many things. For example, if an architect should conceive the form of house in general, under which different shapes of house are included, his will can be inclined to build a square house or a round house or a house of another shape (*QDM*, q. 6).⁷²

My analysis suggests that Aquinas believes the *agent himself* inclines his will to one or another of these options by bringing different instances into the comparison, or even by understanding "house" under yet more general forms, allowing further aspects of each option to stand out in contrast with instances of those more general forms, and so on.

This is what actually happens inside what I called *dianoetic* practical judgment, on Aquinas's view. We get from the relevant universal(s) to a single particular as the best option by such a plastic, rhetorical process of gestalt-shifting comparisons. This is how practical reason performs what Westberg calls its "function", namely "to particularize and specify the good for the will to seek".⁷³ This is right, for the comparative evaluation in counsel terminates in what should be called a *specificatory* judgment, taking some particular *as* the best an instance of the universal(s), or making a non-demonstrative dialectical "inference" from the universal(s) to this particular:

... to draw particular conclusions from universal principles is not the work of the intellect, as such, but of the reason: hence the irascible and concupiscible are said to obey the reason rather than the intellect. Anyone can experience this in himself: for by applying certain universal considerations, anger or fear or the like may be modified or excited (*ST I*, q. 81, a. 3).

Thus the traditional idea of a quasi-syllogistic movement from the universal to the particular actually hides the true complexity of the process that Aquinas discerns. This process includes self-control through envisioning other options or consequences more clearly. Free judgment thus controls the various passions of the sensitive appetite by a higher-order act modifying the field of options in which their appetible objects appear for consideration, for example, by synthesizing them with new considerations that it is at liberty to add, which alter the overall comparative judgment. This is possible, Aquinas reminds us, because cognitive/comparative apprehension of goods is an "interior power," and thus free to apprehend goods not now given to sense. In response to the objection that the sensitive appetite is controlled by external sensation not subject to the will, Aquinas says,

But the interior powers, both appetitive and apprehensive, do not require exterior things. Therefore, they are subject to the command of reason, which can not only incite or modify the affections of the appetitive power, but can also form the phantasms of the imagination (*STI*, q. 81, a. 3, rep. 3).

Here synthetic imagination is explicitly brought into the process by which comparative apprehension leading to choice can *decide* to consider other phantasms with a different effect on the sensitive appetites, or phantasms that may trigger other habits and passions, and so on. In general, then, it is because of an inherent capacity for *modal extension* beyond its factually given inputs that free judgment can be more than just the total vector sum of its pre-existing motives.

8. Conclusion

The above interpretation, I think, successfully explains how Aquinas could accept the thesis (emphasized by intellectual determinist readings) that the will always chooses the option that appears most desirable to the intellect, while also maintaining the agent's strict liberty to choose otherwise than she did: for she controls the judgment involved in choice and thus which option appears best "all things considered." The comparative practical judgment that has this effect in the process of choice itself only seems to be *affected*, not *determined*, by previously acquired habits and other external influences. If this is right, then Aquinas endorses a version of strict libertarianism that is quite compatible with the teleology which is essential to his overall eudaimonism.

Notes

- 1 See Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas's Account of Freedom: Intellect and Will," *Monist* 80:4 (October 1997), 576–98, reprinted in slightly revised form in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, Brian Davies, ed. (Oxford University Press, 2002), 279–94, 290. My citations of this essay will refer to the revised version.

- 2 I reserve the term “libertarian freedom” for this kind of power, starting from a given motivational state at a given moment, to bring about alternative possible decisions. This contrasts with Eleonore Stump’s use of “liberty” to signify only freedom from causal determination by the past and laws of nature. A libertarian in my narrow sense is also a libertarian in Stump’s wider sense, but the converse is not always true. For a libertarian in this wider sense is anyone who holds that the freedom required for moral responsibility is incompatible with natural necessitation or determinism, and “[o]ne can hold an incompatibilist theory of free will, as Aquinas does, without accepting the principle of alternative possibilities” (Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Freedom,” 291). Thus Stump denies that Aquinas is a libertarian in my narrow sense.
- 3 Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Freedom,” 291.
- 4 For a useful summary, see Frederick Copleston’s account of the debate between Jesuits and Dominicans in his *History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, ch. XXI.
- 5 Hugh J. McCann, “Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will,” *Faith and Philosophy* 12:4 (October 1995), 582–98, 585–86.
- 6 This is clearer in the *Summa Theologiae*, I think, than in the corresponding sections of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, chs. 70, 71, and 89, where the human will appears as God’s tool.
- 7 *On Evil [de Malo]*, Brian Davies, ed., Richard Regan, trans. (Oxford University Press, 2003), 261.
- 8 *QDP*, q. 1, a. 5.
- 9 *QDP*, q. 1, a. 5, rep. obj. 13.
- 10 See William Rowe, “The Problem of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom,” *Faith and Philosophy* 16:1 (January, 1999), 98–101.
- 11 Eleonore Stump similarly sets aside the question of theological compatibilism in her essay, “Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” in *Christian Theism and the Problems of Philosophy*, Michael Beaty, ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), reprinted in *Perspectives on Moral Responsibility*, Fischer and Ravizza, eds. 237–62, 251.
- 12 I have attributed a different indirect libertarian conception, formulated in terms of orders of the will, to the early Augustine in my essay, “Liberty of the Higher-Order Will: Frankfurt and Augustine,” *Faith and Philosophy* 19:4 (October 2002), 437–61. Both versions are indebted to Robert Kane’s conception of “ultimate responsibility”: see Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. 77–78.
- 13 John Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 206–207.
- 14 Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Freedom,” 288.
- 15 Stump also mentions this case in “Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” 255.
- 16 Unless otherwise noted, all references to the *Summa Theologiae* will be from the literal translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1923).
- 17 *QDP*, *On the Power of God*, q. 1, a. 5. Compare *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, ch. 80: “That His Own Being and His Own Goodness God Wills Necessarily”.
- 18 See Alasdair MacIntyre’s argument that for Aquinas, many non-human animals can be conscious of goods that constitute for them reasons for action, even though they lack the linguistic concept of “reason” and its reflective/critical use: *Dependent Rational Animals* (Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, 1999), 55–56.

- 19 David Gallagher, "Thomas Aquinas on Will as Rational Appetite," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 29:4 (October 1991): 559–84, 568.
- 20 Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994; 2002), 50.
- 21 Stump, "Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities," 252. This point is confirmed in *QDM* q. 6, a. 1, rep. 7.
- 22 Stump "Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities," 253. Stump does acknowledge that for Aquinas, the intellect is not capable of ignoring the perfect good of the beatific vision. Still, the point that Stump makes in this passage is vital, because it disproves her own later assertion that if there are cases in which only one means can positively be chosen, then responsibility does not entail significant alternatives for Aquinas (see "Aquinas's Account of Freedom," 287).
- 23 Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 227. On this issue, also see Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 75–76.
- 24 Eleonore Stump seems to assume that we are responsible for willing happiness, and any especially clear elements of it, since she refers to this as one among a set of cases allegedly showing that Aquinas rejects PAP, the principle of alternative possibilities (see "Aquinas's Account of Freedom," 287). To generalize, her idea seems to be that for any rational will *W*, willing its formal natural *telos* *T* is autonomous for *W*, and therefore *W* is responsible for willing *T* even though it cannot do otherwise. This seems to me to saddle Aquinas with an implausible view, for nothing is responsible for what it is made to be: its Maker is responsible for its nature.
- 25 Note that it is precisely this *non-Aristotelian* move in Aquinas's theory of voluntariness which places him in direct opposition to the possibility of negative freedom as "spontaneity" for which Immanuel Kant argues in his famous "Antinomies" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.
- 26 This is arguably St. Anselm's position. A contemporary version of it is found in Susan Wolf's thesis that responsibility only requires an ability "to do the right thing for the right reasons", or to act on the basis of a reliable judgment of the true and the good – see Wolf, *Freedom within Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 85. This view implies that a being who could only make the best choices could still be responsible without being (or ever having been) able to do otherwise, whereas a being who makes wrong choices would have to have been able to make right choices instead (and thus be able to do otherwise) to count as responsible. In Wolf's view, adding the ability to go wrong to the former agent is not adding anything of value (82). However, Wolf perhaps fails to note that an ability need not have intrinsic value *in itself* to be essential to moral responsibility for one's actions.
- 27 David Gallagher, "Thomas Aquinas on Will as Rational Appetite," 565.
- 28 Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 55.
- 29 However, suppose we believe that there are cases in which only one option is willable, but *not* because of habits that the agent has acquired through past choices in which more than one option was willable. For example, perhaps we believe that the desire for self-preservation is so strong that, when the only options available are (1) easily and costlessly saving one's life, or (2) suffering a pointless death, then one cannot refrain from acting to save one's life. Assuming that I'm not depressed or otherwise suicidal, and I'm walking across the road for a stroll, and a car comes roaring around the bend, perhaps I really *cannot* just decide to stand there and get hit. If the intention to move is teleologically necessary for any normal human mind in these circumstances, then it

- seems reasonable to say that I would not really be responsible for moving: this is an automatic response to a universal no-brainer case.
- 30 Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith*, 205 (the text actually reads “under which it wills”, but I assume this to be a typographical error).
 - 31 C. S. Lewis manages to capture this aspect of Aquinas’s mystical conception of the infinite good in his wonderful essay, “The Weight of Glory,” *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, Walter Hooper, ed. (New York, NY: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1996).
 - 32 Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 222. Pasnau takes this term from Robert Kane’s notion of “plural voluntary control”: see Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*, 107–11.
 - 33 Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 55.
 - 34 Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 89.
 - 35 David M. Gallagher, “Aquinas on Goodness and Moral Goodness,” in *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy*, Gallagher, ed. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 37–60, 48.
 - 36 This is how John Fischer and Mark Ravizza characterize “guidance control” in their semicompatibilist account of moral responsibility: see Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). They contrast this kind of freedom-condition with “regulative control” or libertarian freedom in my sense.
 - 37 Gallagher, “Aquinas on Goodness and Moral Goodness,” 47.
 - 38 Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Freedom: Intellect and Will,” 289.
 - 39 Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 231.
 - 40 Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 232.
 - 41 Norman Kretzmann, “Philosophy of Mind,” in the *Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, Kretzmann and Stump, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 128–59, 147.
 - 42 Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 221. He actually writes “... without end,” but of course Aquinas would reject any infinite regress here.
 - 43 Gallagher, “Aquinas on Goodness and Moral Goodness,” 49.
 - 44 Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 223, defends this thesis by looking at Aquinas’s commentary on Lombard’s sentences. He concludes that in Aquinas’s view, “It is incoherent ... to suppose that the will might be indeterminately free to choose one option or another, and might make that choice without being determined to do so” by the intellect.
 - 45 See Gallagher’s discussion in “Thomas Aquinas on the Will as Rational Appetite,” 571.
 - 46 Daniel Dennett, *Elbow Room* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), 133.
 - 47 Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Freedom,” 291. To avoid confusion, remember that Stump does not equate “libertarianism” with this strict libertarian power to do otherwise, as I do.
 - 48 In terms of the contemporary language of possible worlds, we could say “starting from the same world-segment.”
 - 49 Stump seems to suggest this when she writes that the will cannot choose otherwise “when the intellect establishes very clearly that one course of action is in every respect superior to any other available” (“Aquinas’s Account of Freedom,” 287). Yet in such cases, the will’s freedom to disengage or refuse to engage seems to become a significant alternative again.
 - 50 These two powers must be “proportionate,” as he says, because Aquinas defines

"appetite" as an "inclination surpassing natural inclination." Natural inclination is a tendency to an end which a thing has without any apprehension, but it is through appetite that "the animal is able to desire what it apprehends" (*ST* I, q. 80, a. 1). Therefore all appetite, sensible and intellectual, depends on apprehension.

51 Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith*, 179.

52 Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith*, 204.

53 This is confirmed by Aquinas's clarification that "The reason's ... judgment of what is to be done is about things that are contingent and possible to us. In such matters, the conclusions do not follow of necessity from principles that are absolutely necessary, but from such as are so conditionally" (*ST* I-II, q. 13, a. 6, rep. 2). Note that this is the same distinction between types of necessity that Aquinas made in discussing God's volitions.

54 This is much the same as with hermeneutically bound reasoning in general, according to Stephen Watson's account in *Tradition(s): Refiguring Community and Virtue in Classical German Thought* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1997). To that extent, Gadamer remains in the tradition of Thomistic analogical rationality.

55 Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 85.

56 Kretzmann, "Philosophy of Mind," 148.

57 Gallagher, "Thomas Aquinas on the Will as Rational Appetite," 571. Gallagher also discusses the idea that the will causes itself to perform internal acts, such as forming an intention or choosing to act in a particular way, in his essay, "Aquinas on Moral Action," 123.

58 Gallagher, "Thomas Aquinas on the Will as Rational Appetite," 573–74.

59 This is the problem of so-called "contrastive explanation." For example, see the discussion of this problem in Timothy O'Connor, *Persons and Causes* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 91–95.

60 Stump, "Aquinas's Account of Freedom," 289. Note, however, that on Stump's own analysis, these alternative possibilities exist in the intellect in part because of the will's ability to influence the intellect within a limited range. So they are really emergent from the complex dialectical relationship of these two powers.

61 Stump, "Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities," 253.

62 See Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 220.

63 In his later question on "What Moves the Will," Aquinas clarifies the need to apprehend phantasms of value if the appetite is to be moved: "Just as the imagination of a form without *estimation* of fitness or harmfulness, does not move the sensitive appetite; so neither does the apprehension of the true without the aspect of goodness or desirability" (*ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 1, rep. 2). Thus imagination in non-human animals plays a role analogous to speculative intellect in human souls, whereas the estimative power in animals plays a role analogous to human practical intellect.

64 "Cogitative" here refers to the same power of reason which is translated as "cognitive" in later questions. The Latin term *cogitativa* underlies both variants in translation. This is the same power that Aquinas elsewhere calls practical reasoning.

65 This is interestingly similar to Robert Nozick's idea of self-subsuming non-random weights assigned in the process of decision itself: see Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 294–307.

66 Even where only one is apparently considered with clarity, it is understood against the background of other suppressed or omitted virtual options.

67 These two senses of imagination as passive and active were inherited and complicated by modern philosophy, as we see in Descartes's notion of recombinatorial imagination, Kant's distinction between the passive "figurative" synthesis of sensible apprehensions

and the active “secondary imagination,” and a similar division in Dilthey’s aesthetic theory. These governing alternatives are not really transcended until Coleridge’s conception of an imaginative *fusion* went beyond the recombinatorial model of active imagination, and Heidegger’s conception of a pragmatic anticipatory “forehaving” grounded in free being-in-the-world displaced passive figuration as the explanation for how a world is “given” to us.

- 68 It is at this point in this analysis, developed from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* III.5, that Aquinas seems to come closest to Harry Frankfurt’s idea of a higher-order will that could either identify with or alienate a lower (first-order) appetite. See my paper, “Liberty of the Higher-Order Will.”
- 69 This suggests another kind of tracing condition, namely one referring to the higher-order will to change one’s character: even if one’s disposition makes a given choice inevitable in the circumstances, one has the power to identify with this disposition or not. Again, see my paper, “Liberty of the Higher-Order Will.”
- 70 Jenkins, *Knowledge and Faith*, 207. Unlike Jenkins (206–207), I think that this liberty to resist habit is always present, at least to some vanishingly small degree, in every case for Aquinas.
- 71 *Contra* Stump, “Intellect, Will, and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities,” 256.
- 72 *On Evil*, Regan, trans., 255–56.
- 73 Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 85.

Chapter Eight

Medieval Theories of Intentionality: from Aquinas to Brentano and Beyond

Anthony J. Lisska

1. Introduction

In both contemporary analytic philosophy and contemporary continental philosophy, mainstream discussions in the philosophy of mind often use the concept of intentionality as a central component. This chapter reaches back into the Middle Ages and dusts off, as it were, an earlier theory of intentionality, one found in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. This discussion is an instance of what John Haldane, in his October 1997 issue of *The Monist*, referred to as “Analytical Thomism,” and he exhibits this approach to working with the texts of Thomas Aquinas in a recently edited volume entitled *Mind, Metaphysics and Value in the Thomistic and Analytical Tradition*.¹ An English Dominican, Brian Davies, formerly of Blackfriars at the University of Oxford and now at Fordham University, is another leading figure in analytic approaches to Aquinas. The April 1999 issue of Oxford’s *New Blackfriars* was devoted to a discussion by contemporary philosophers of this concept of “Analytical Thomism.” Many younger analytic philosophers have adopted Haldane’s approach, which he has spelled out in various essays.² This discussion focuses attention principally on what Aquinas contributed to contemporary discussions on intentionality theory in analytic philosophy. Haldane’s analyses of these issues are instructive, and this discussion appeals often to his insightful essays and utilizes the approach to medieval philosophy that Haldane has described.

Oxford philosopher Anthony Kenny once wrote the following about the importance of Aquinas’s thesis of intentionality: “Aquinas’s doctrine of the intentional existence of forms remains one of the most interesting contributions ever made to the philosophical problem of the nature of thought.”³ Kenny also wrote the following: “One of the most elaborate, and one of the most puzzling accounts of the harmony between the world and thought is Aquinas’s doctrine of the immaterial intentional existence of forms in the mind.”⁴

Often contemporary discussions dealing with Aquinas’s theory of intentionality follow on the coat-tails of recent work in Aristotelian philosophy of mind. Names like Richard Sorabji, Myles Burnyeat, Hilary Putnam, John McDowell, Victor Caston, Christopher Shiels and Martha Nussbaum, among others, populate the list of those spending time unearthing insights Aristotle offers in the general area of

intentionality theory. In fact, writing on the importance of Aquinas and his *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* for contemporary philosophy of mind, Nussbaum made the following claims:

Aquinas's commentary [on Aristotle's *De Anima*], ... produced in the thirteenth century, is one of the very greatest commentaries on the work ..., [and] Aquinas's commentary itself is very insightful; so too are the extensive remarks about Aristotelian soul-body issues contained in the *Summa Theologiae*.⁵

Dominik Perler's recent anthology, *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, is a welcome addition to the burgeoning work in this area.⁶

2. Back to Brentano

This interest by analytic philosophers harkens back to Franz Brentano (1838–1917), whose *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* brought the medieval concept of intentionality theory into mainstream contemporary philosophy. Often Brentano is hailed as the philosophical godfather of contemporary discussions on intentionality theory. A classic expression of the roots of intentionality is found in Brentano's *Psychologie*, where he wrote the following about intentionality theory:

The data of our consciousness make up a world which, taken in its entirety, falls into two great classes, the class of physical and the class of mental phenomena ... Every presentation of sensation or imagination offers an example of the mental phenomena ... Thus hearing a sound, seeing a colored object, sensing warm or cold, and the comparable states of imagination as well, are examples of what I mean ...

Examples of physical phenomena, on the other hand, are a color, a shape, a landscape, which I see; a musical chord which I hear; heat, cold, odor, which I sense These examples may suffice as concrete illustrations of the distinction between the two classes.⁷

In *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, Brentano characterizes this fundamental intentional property in the following way: "*Charakteristisch für die psychischen Phänomene ist die Beziehung ein Object.*" Much of the renewed interest in Aquinas in analytic philosophy, in turn, is due to three English philosophers: Peter Geach, Elizabeth Anscombe and Anthony Kenny. Several years ago, Haldane wrote the following about the classic roots of intentionality found in the texts of Aquinas:

[G]iven the present day interest in the "aboutness" of thought, it is worth noting that ... Aquinas [offers] a turn upon the nature of intentionality and its difference from physical relations. (Indeed, the very term and concept originate in the medieval notion of *esse intentionale*, the "intentional being" of thoughts.)⁸

The purpose of this inquiry is to provide a lucid analysis of what Gustav Bergmann would have called “Aquinas’s ontological assay of the awareness situation,” with special emphasis given to his theory of intentionality.

Roderick Chisholm introduced the concept of intentionality into mainstream American analytic philosophy. Chisholm himself was for many years an executor of the Brentano papers. A half century ago, Chisholm wrote about Brentano in the following way:

Franz Brentano wrote, in a well-known passage, that *intentionality* is peculiar to psychical phenomena. No *physical* phenomenon, he said, shows anything like it; hence, intentionality affords us a criterion of the mental or psychical. Let us refer to this as “Brentano’s thesis”.⁹

What Chisholm eventually came to hold is that the capacity of language to refer and represent should be explained in terms of the capacity of the mind to refer and represent.¹⁰

At the beginning of this discussion, an important claim needs to be articulated. A theory of intentionality need not entail a realm of subsistent objects. While it is true that some philosophers, most notably Meinong, and, according to Chisholm, the early Brentano¹¹ did postulate subsistent objects of intentional acts, nonetheless this metaphysical pluralism is not a necessary condition for a theory of intentionality. Chisholm himself, it should be noted, postulated subsistent entities – universal sortal qualities and incidental characteristics. The analysis of intentionality put forward in this chapter requires, as a necessary condition, a set of ontological characteristics distinguishing knowers from non-knowers. This distinction, however, entails no ontological commitment to subsistent objects of awareness.

In this chapter, a case will be made for the following three propositions: (1) In principle, Aquinas agrees with Brentano’s distinction between mental or intentional states and physical states. This corresponds to Aquinas’s distinction between an *esse intentionale* and an *esse naturale*. (2) In a manner similar to G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell,¹² Aquinas accepts the act/object distinction, which is rooted in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. (3) The characteristic of “tending toward” is built into epistemological dispositions and acts of awareness discussed in Aquinas’s theory of knowledge. As Geach once wrote, in Aquinas’s account of intentionality, the human mind “... reaches right up to the reality.”¹³

This is not to imply, however, that Brentano had it all correct in interpreting Aquinas on intentionality. Several articles in the Nussbaum and Rorty volume, *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima*,¹⁴ suggest, for instance, similarities and contrasts of the role Brentano’s thesis of intentionality played in differing interpretations of Aristotelian based intentionality theory. Haldane also argues for significant differences.¹⁵

While Chisholm is often given credit for introducing intentionality theory into the philosophy of mind discussions of English-speaking philosophers, especially from Brentano, nonetheless, in early twentieth-century analytic philosophy,

Bertrand Russell also referred to Brentano's concept of intentionality. Note the following passage from Russell's *The Analysis of Mind*:

We may take as some of the best and most typical representatives of this school the Austrian psychologist Brentano, whose *Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint*, though published in 1874, is still influential and was the starting-point of a great deal of interesting work. [Russell here quotes the passage noted above from Brentano's *Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint*.] The view here expressed, that relation to an object is an ultimate irreducible characteristic of mental phenomena, is one which I shall be concerned to combat.¹⁶

Hence Chisholm and Russell radically part company on the philosophical significance of Brentano's thesis of intentionality. Nonetheless the role Brentano played in the beginning stages of analytic philosophy cannot be underestimated. Writing in the introduction to the second edition of the English translation of Brentano's *Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint*, Peter Simons noted that "the relevance of Brentano's work for the beginning of analytic philosophy has become plain."¹⁷

3. Differing Views of Intentionality Theory

While it is customary to begin discussions of Aquinas on intentionality theory by referring to the passages from Brentano, nonetheless the place where Aquinas falls in these discussions needs to be spelled out. In contemporary philosophy of mind, intentionality theory means different things to different philosophers. The concept of intentionality is more like a "family resemblance" than it is a concept with a strictly defined set of necessary and sufficient conditions. The following discussion merely hints at the differences found in contemporary and historical accounts of intentionality theory.

Brentano's discussion of intentionality exerted substantial influence on both contemporary analytic philosophy and contemporary phenomenology. Russell and Moore, through their analyses of Meinong's philosophy on subsistent objects and their combined refutations of idealism, helped establish intentionality theory in English-speaking philosophy, especially their discussions of the act/object distinction. Later in the century, Geach incorporated these discussions into his analysis of Aquinas on intentionality within the context of analytic philosophy. Phenomenologists, on the other hand, appealed to Brentano's concept of intentionality in order to begin what they considered to be "descriptive" accounts of mental experience. This appropriation is especially true of Husserl, who once suggested that Brentano "... earned the epoch-making advantage of making phenomenology possible. He presented to the modern era the idea of intentionality."¹⁸ Brentano is thus considered the philosophical godfather of two distinct and disparate contemporary developments in intentionality theory.

Within the context of analytic philosophy, moreover, there are several categories of philosophical discussions on the concept of intentionality. Firstly, recent

intentionality theory has focused attention on the “tending towards” aspect of propositional contents. This suggests that intentionality theory is rooted in an analysis of propositions and is, therefore, seen as a semantic property of intentional sentences. It would appear that William Lycan, among others, would fit into this category.

Secondly, some philosophers adopt what Chisholm once called the “funny characteristic” possessed by knowers as the defining ontological property of intentionality theory. In his famous debate with Wilfred Sellars, Chisholm referred to intentionality as “... a funny kind of characteristic that ordinary physical things don’t have.”¹⁹ Chisholm’s account emphasizes an ontological difference between knowers and non-knowers. In other words, Chisholm’s “funny characteristic” posits an ontological characteristic delineating knowers from non-knowers, which is not reducible to a linguistic discussion of propositions. Commenting on this ontological dimension in Chisholm’s theory of intentionality, Jaegwon Kim offered the following remarks:

Chisholm has come to accept the position that intentionality is a basic and uneliminable feature of the world. In fact, not only his philosophy of mind and language but his general ontology itself is now based on an intentional foundation.²⁰

Aquinas adopts this ontological aspect of intentionality theory when he suggests that a knower has the ontological ability to acquire a form immaterially. This, of course, differs from most twentieth-century phenomenologists, who, it appears, aspire to develop a descriptive analysis of mental activity independent of ontological presuppositions.

A third difference concerns whether intentionality theory belongs to concepts only or includes in addition percepts and sensations. Several analytic philosophers argue that intentionality theory applies only to the cognitive content of concepts and not to sensation or perception. Hence this account of intentionality removes the phenomenal from intentionality discussions. For example, Wilfred Sellars in *Science, Perception and Reality*, once argued that the senses have only “pseudo-intentionality.”²¹ This claim depends upon Sellar’s analysis of cognitivity in terms of an awareness of “being in kind,” which appears to be sortal concepts. Sellars believes his position restricts intentionality to cognitive matters of concepts and removes intentionality from matters of sensation.

These three distinctions regarding differing intentionality theories apply to Aquinas’s analysis of intentionality in the following ways: (1) Aquinas will hold for an ontological theory of intentionality. A knower has an ontological capacity or ability, rooted in the essence or natural kind of a knower, to be able to acquire forms or structures of other things in an intentional manner. Aquinas’s position is more than a characteristic of propositional contents. (2) The content of an awareness, what Aquinas refers to as *esse intentionale*, has a basic “tending towards” an object in the external world. (3) Aquinas writes that *esse intentionale* pertains to both sense awareness and the cognitive awareness of concepts. Sense awareness for Aquinas holds for both the external senses and the internal senses. Parenthetically,

even if Sellars were correct in limiting intentionality only to what he called “cognitive awareness of kinds,” nonetheless recent research undertaken with Aquinas’s philosophy of mind on inner sense suggests that Sellars’s claims would only apply to the external senses in Aquinas’s philosophy of mind.²² Aquinas claims that the *vis cogitativa*, which is a faculty of inner sense, is aware of individuals as members of a natural kind.²³ The *vis cogitativa* will be discussed briefly at the end of this chapter. Thus even if Sellars were correct on the limits of intentionality theory, Aquinas uses the concept “*esse intentionale*” when referring to both non-phenomenal inner sense knowledge of the *vis cogitativa* and intellectual knowledge. Nonetheless Aquinas would reject Sellars’s limiting intentionality, since Aquinas holds that *esse intentionale* applies to all mental acts of awareness, including the external senses. Texts of Aquinas illustrating each of these claims will be used later in this essay.

Aquinas accepts the principle found in Chisholm that ontological characteristics of a knower are necessary conditions for an adequate theory of intentionality. Both Chisholm and Haldane adopt the working principle in the philosophy of mind that a theory of mind entails a workable ontology. Without a sufficient ontology, the philosophy of mind will not get off the ground. Thomas Aquinas too accepts this ontological presupposition. Hence Aquinas belongs to the analytic tradition characterized by Chisholm’s account of intentionality. There are significant differences, however, that will be noted and discussed as this analysis unfolds.

4. Aquinas on Intentionality

Before delving into the intricate points necessary to elucidate Aquinas’s theory of intentionality, it is important to indicate briefly the mode Aquinas adopts in undertaking the philosophical enterprise. Aquinas endorses a meta-philosophy distinct from much of the twentieth-century canon; this itself is a remarkable item that is often hidden when contemporary philosophers discuss the history of medieval philosophy of mind. Aquinas builds his ontology first, and then his philosophy of mind and his epistemology follow from the ontological analysis already constructed. Not only is Aquinas not a Cartesian in metaphysical and substance dualism, but in a deeper sense, his approach to undertaking the activity of philosophy differs radically from the Cartesian method. There is a fundamental meta-philosophical difference between Aquinas and many practitioners of modern and contemporary philosophy. Scott MacDonald once put the matter in the following way: “Aquinas does not build his philosophical system around a theory of knowledge. In fact, the reverse is true: he builds his epistemology on the basis provided by other parts of his system, in particular, his metaphysics and psychology.”²⁴

Writing in much the same vein about Aristotle and Aquinas, Haldane argued recently that there is “no epistemology without ontology.”²⁵ Haldane suggested that one needs to account for a theory of the person first, which person has the dispositional properties to have cognitions and undertake actions. This theme, of

endorsing a holistic account of the human person as agent and knower, is central in Aquinas's ontology and repeats itself often. For instance, Aquinas wrote emphatically that "*anima mea non est ego*,"²⁶ which is an explicit denial of Cartesian substance dualism. Like MacDonald, Haldane further suggests that Aristotle and Aquinas adopt a different architectonic of proceeding in the philosophy of mind from what one finds in modern and contemporary philosophy:

Our knowledge of the external world is the starting point for philosophical reflection, the task of which is not to *justify* this knowledge but to *explain* it; to give an account of the scope of cognition, its genesis and its operations.²⁷

To paraphrase from the writings of the late Henry Veatch – Aquinas does not adopt the "Transcendental Turn" when developing his philosophy of mind. This entails that Aquinas does not accept *a priori* a set of epistemological criteria that result in a "foundationalist epistemology." Aquinas does not attempt to justify an instance of veridical awareness, but rather he seeks to explain the possibility of those acts of awareness. Aquinas develops his theory of intentionality within this philosophical architectonic. No doubt this lack of foundationalist worries, so divergent from the thrust of much modern and contemporary epistemology and philosophy of mind, provoked, until recently, the general lack of interest in Aristotelian realism and intentionality theory.

Lest one believe that Chisholm and Aquinas are allied with one another on intentionality discussions, however, one need but consider what Chisholm wrote about Aristotelian intentionality theory. In his *Foundations of Knowledge*, Chisholm articulated the following reservation suggesting that Aristotle and Aquinas's account of intentionality might not cohere philosophically:

Aristotle taught that, in knowing, the soul "receives the form of the object" and that "actual knowledge is identical with its object" This doctrine which was developed by Thomas Aquinas and his commentators ... could be taken to say that when (a) man perceives a dog, then the man, or his soul, takes on all the characteristics of the dog, though without becoming identical with the matter of the dog, and that when the man perceives a dog and a bird together, then the man becomes "formally identical" with the dog, and also with bird. There have been many attempts to make this doctrine intelligible, but I cannot feel that they have been successful.²⁸

The task of the analysis in this chapter is to render Aquinas's "doctrine" of intentionality "intelligible."

The concept of intentionality is used in this discussion because Aquinas's epistemology and philosophy of mind can best be elucidated and understood by contemporary philosophers in terms of a thesis of intentionality. In writing about issues in the philosophy of mind, Aquinas often reiterated the importance of the concepts of *esse intentionale* and *esse naturale*. Geach often elaborated upon this distinction found in the texts of Aquinas.²⁹ Like Brentano, Aquinas uses this distinction as a means of rendering a category difference between knowers and non-knowers. In turn, this distinction warrants using an intentionality thesis as a

backdrop for analyzing the difficult passages in which Aquinas considers the problems of knowledge.

Part of the difficulty one faces in spelling out Aquinas's account of knowledge rests in the obscure metaphysical language in which most of the narrative is couched. For centuries, readers of Aquinas's texts have confronted this set of issues. The principal statement of this theory asserts that knowledge is the "having of a form of another without its matter." The following passage from the *ST* is a good description of a knower in Aquinas's system:

The difference between knowing and non-knowing beings is that the latter have nothing but their own form; the knowing being, on the other hand, is one whose nature it is to have in addition the form of something else, for the likeness (form) of the thing known is in the knower.³⁰

In his *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Soul*, moreover, Aquinas asserts that the "receiving of a form without matter" is the ontological ground for distinguishing *esse naturale* from *esse intentionale*:

Sense receives form without matter, since form has a mode of being in sensation different from that in the sensible object. For in the sensible object, it has natural being (*esse naturale*), while in the sense faculty it has intentional being (*esse intentionale*).³¹

This is, of course, a difficult bit of philosophical language to explain. Firstly, the concepts themselves are not expressed in ordinary language. On first hearing this text, often one utters in faint mockery – "How quaint!" Secondly, and more importantly, a necessary condition for understanding these concepts requires an awareness of other concepts from Aristotelian metaphysics that function as presuppositions for the philosophy of mind. As MacDonald noted, Aquinas bases his philosophy of mind on his metaphysics. There is no way around this mode of operating and understanding Aquinas on mind. This is the philosophical import of Haldane's principle that there is "no epistemology without ontology."³²

5. "Intentional" not Identical with "Spiritual"

At the outset, one must realize that even though the terms "intentional" and "immaterial" are sometimes used interchangeably, Aquinas's discussion of the concept of "mental" or "intentional" is neither equated with nor co-extensive with the concept of a "spiritual being." In discussing the difference between *esse intentionale* and *esse naturale* in the *ST*, Aquinas writes "*est autem duplex immutatio, una naturalis et alia spiritualis*."³³ Yet here Aquinas means an "intentional" reception of a form, for several lines later in this article, he writes that it is through "*immutatio spiritualis*" that the intention becomes in the sense organ – "*immutatio per quam intentio formae sensibilis fiat in organo sensus*." When Aquinas considers *esse intentionale*, he is not adopting what Ryle once called the infamous "ghost in the machine." Of course, this claim does not entail that there are

no spiritual existents in Aquinas's ontology. Obviously, like most medieval philosophers, Aquinas wrote about God and separated substances (angels and disembodied human souls). Nonetheless it does not follow that, because a being is capable of intentionality, that being also instantiates a non-material, spiritual existence. Aquinas was aware of this possible misinterpretation.³⁴ In *ST* when discussing how an angel knows, Aquinas distinguishes explicitly between a "spiritual existence" and an "intentional existence":

When one angel knows another angel, it is through a species existing in its intellect; such an existence differs from the known angel not according to a difference between material and immaterial being, but rather according to the difference between natural (*esse naturale*) and intentional (*esse intentionale*). For the angel itself is a form subsisting in natural being; yet its species in the intellect of another angel is different in that, in the intellect, it possesses only an intentional existence. In a like manner, the form of color of the wall has a natural existence; yet the same form in a different medium (that is, when the color is known) has intentional being.³⁵

This passage is important textually for three reasons. Firstly, Aquinas writes about *esse intentionale*. Secondly, it is clear that he distinguishes *esse intentionale* from *esse spirituale*. While *esse intentionale* is "immaterial," it is not reducible to Cartesian substance immateriality. Thirdly, Aquinas notes explicitly that *esse intentionale* holds when a perceiver is aware of the color on the wall. This distinction of the color of the wall and the color as perceived harkens back to the Brentano passage noted above. Moreover Aquinas's account differs from the restricted intentionality theory spelled out by Sellars, among others. Therefore the concepts of *esse intentionale* and *esse spirituale* are neither identical nor co-extensive. Once again, Aquinas is not a Cartesian substance dualist.

Aquinas's characterizations of the cognitive powers necessary for intentionality, moreover, are not ordinary dispositional properties like solubility. Rather, the built-in characteristic of "tending towards" is a defining ontological structure of this dispositional property, which solubility lacks. In fact, Aquinas writes generally about "intention" in the following way: "... intention, as the name indicates, means to tend toward something."³⁶ Aquinas stresses continually that all knowledge implies that the thing known is somehow present in the knower. Accordingly, the set of dispositional properties, which constitutes a knower as a knower, enables the knower to go beyond itself and yet not physically and entitatively become that which it is "tending towards." In discussing the epistemology of Aquinas, Geach wrote the following about the directedness of mental acts, part of which was noted above: "What makes a sensation or thought of an X to be *of an X* is that it is an individual occurrence of that very form or nature which occurs in an X – it is that our mind 'reaches right up to reality'."³⁷

In Aquinas's ontology, therefore, cognitive immateriality is an ontological primitive, which is a set of metaphysical properties that grounds the possibility of intentionality. This would be an example of Chisholm's "funny characteristic." Aquinas offers further analysis of the claims of immateriality and the basic "tending towards" property characteristic of mental acts in his *Commentary on*

Aristotle's On the Soul when he discusses Empedocles's theory of perception. Empedocles held as his primary epistemological axiom that "Like knows like." Furthermore Empedocles provided a literal interpretation of this axiom. An entailment of this axiom is that the sense faculties are constituted entitatively with the same kinds of objects that exist in the material world. According to Empedocles, the elements, which make up the sense faculties and enable perception to occur, are the same structurally and entitatively as the constituents of the physical objects in the external world. In refuting the position articulated by Empedocles, Aquinas in effect ruled out any theory of physicalism or reductive materialism, positions that Thomas ascribes to the ancient naturalists – *antiqui naturales*.³⁸ In Aquinas's theory, neither Cartesian substance dualism nor reductive materialism is compatible with a thesis of intentionality.

In summary, the following propositions apply to Aquinas's use of intentionality: (1) Aquinas is an ontological realist, which entails that the world is structured in organized ways. His ontological theory of form provides the structures through which the external work is organized. (2) Aquinas is an epistemologist realist, which entails that knowers in some way are able to grasp those structures that organize the external world. These ontological properties of knowers tend towards the structures – forms – in the world. (3) "*Esse intentionale*" is the cognitive content of an act of awareness in Aquinas's theory. (4) "*Esse intentionale*" depends on an ontological ability of a knower to attain knowledge states. These ontological knowing or cognitive powers or dispositions are part of the structure of a substantial form, which in turn determines the natural kind of the knower. (5) Sense knowledge, both external and internal, and intellectual knowledge depend on ontological abilities of the person to have knowledge and are expressed by the respective instantiations of *esse intentionale*.

At times in discussions of Aquinas on intentionality, there is a conceptual muddle between numbers "3" and "4" above. *Esse intentionale* refers to the cognitive content of the act of awareness; yet this act of awareness and its content depend on an ontological characteristic or disposition of the knower. This ontological dispositional property – what Aquinas often refers to as a "power" – is a necessary condition for explaining the possibility of knowing. Thus cognitive content is exemplified in an instance of *esse intentionale*; the knower instantiates a particular mental act of *esse intentionale* here and now, which is only possible because of the dispositional properties embedded in the substantial form of the knower. Aquinas posits an ontological ground for awareness, which mental act tends towards its object.

6. Thomas Reid and James Gibson

Chisholm and Haldane both note that Aquinas's theory of intentionality resembles the philosophy of mind articulated by Thomas Reid. Reid, William Kneale once wrote, rescued the word "perception" from the early modern philosophers where, Kneale suggests, the term ceased to have any clear meaning.³⁹ Empiricists like

Hume thought themselves entitled to use “perception” as an “omnibus word” for whatever goes on in the mind. On matters of perception, Aquinas differs radically from Hume. Haldane once wrote the following on this relationship between Aquinas and Reid: “Like Thomas Reid writing five hundred years later, Aquinas himself is simply trying to identify at the level of metaphysical description what is implicit in our everyday dealings with the world.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, in suggesting that Aquinas’s analysis is like Peter Strawson’s “descriptive metaphysics,” Haldane notes that Aquinas’s analysis “... is a philosophical defense of common sense.”⁴¹ It appears that Aquinas would not deny the importance of what contemporary philosophers of mind often call “Folk Psychology.”⁴² This argument suggesting structural similarities between Aquinas and Reid was not endorsed by several neo-scholastic philosophers in the middle part of the twentieth century. In his *Criteriology*, Paul Glenn, for example, wrote that Reid’s “theory is altogether inadequate and untenable.”⁴³

The *explicatio textus* of sense organ and sense faculty in his *Commentary on Aristotle’s On the Soul* is remarkably similar to the method articulated by James Gibson in discussing the evolutionary development of human sense organs. It is through this evolutionary development, Gibson maintains, that a human knower can make one’s way around the environment. This position is often referred to as “ecological perception theory.” While Gibson does not affirm an ontology of holistic primary substances, nonetheless he does consider the role the environment plays in determining how sense organs and faculties have developed and function. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, for Aquinas.⁴⁴ This gives a certain cash value to Aquinas’s oft-repeated claim that “nature does not act in vain” and “the knowing faculty is made for the act of knowing, which in turn is made for the object of knowing.” In *De Potentia*, Aquinas wrote the following: “The first things known are things outside the mind to which the intellect is first directed in thought.”⁴⁵

An initial response to these claims is often another: “How quaint!” – quickly followed by a dismissal, especially by philosophers who adopt a foundationalist approach to the philosophy of mind. One might respond that this use of language may be Aquinas’s way of introducing a version of “epistemological naturalism” into his system. Haldane too observes this epistemological naturalism in Aquinas, and he suggested recently that Aquinas and Willard Quine share some important meta-philosophical themes, since in the philosophy of mind “both are philosophical naturalists.”⁴⁶ Haldane also notes that contemporary philosophers might learn from the meta-philosophy adopted by Aquinas; if philosophers were to “follow Aquinas and Quine and distinguish philosophical explanation from justification, then there is no general problem of inductive scepticism that the philosopher or anyone else is obliged to answer.”⁴⁷ The point here is that Aquinas attempts to offer an explanation of knowledge and not a justification of acts of awareness against skepticism. Aquinas is not undertaking epistemological foundationalism.

One must understand, however, what this position on Aquinas and naturalism means. There are at least two senses of naturalism in philosophy of mind discussions: (1) Scientific reductionism, meaning that all mental terms are

reducible to physical causes and materialist explanations; (2) Cognitive faculty development, meaning that the analysis of the development of knowing powers in order to “grasp” the structures of reality is a natural, biological process.

Aquinas, through the use of his theory of intentionality, accepts a modified version of the second position of naturalism but rejects the first. This is the cash value of Aquinas’s claim that “nature does not act in vain.” As Haldane notes, intentional capacities or dispositions may be “a very special case of the teleological.”⁴⁸

7. Intentionality and the Problems of Representationalism

In his theory of perception, Aquinas argues for a version of direct realism. His analysis suggests several important connections with contemporary work on intentionality theories based upon Aristotelian realism. For example, Haldane once suggested that Putnam’s denial that the mind is an “inner theatre” is important in the attempt to understand Aquinas.⁴⁹ This inner theatre model is a direct reference to representationalism, which is familiar in all post-Cartesian philosophy of mind. This inner theatre account entails that efficient causation is a sufficient condition to explain sensation and perception. Secondly, the inner theatre position entailing representationalism assumes what might be called a highest common factor for two disjunctive claims: a veridical awareness and a non-veridical awareness. Descartes, for example, would accept this highest common factor position, especially as elucidated in his *First Meditation*. According to Haldane, Putnam voiced his concerns on this set of issues by suggesting that Aristotle offered a disjunctive account, which does not postulate any highest common factor between an illusion and a veridical perception. In his texts on sensation in *ST* and in his *Commentary on Aristotle’s On the Soul*, Aquinas too denies any common item between illusion and veridical awareness. With his analysis of the necessity of a formal cause, Haldane proposes that the infallibility of sensation that both Aristotle and Aquinas consider for the awareness of proper sensibles is a conceptual matter and never a muddled empirical claim. Aristotle and Aquinas argue that the intentionality of sensation lies in the fact that it is a taking on of the sensible quality that it is said to be “about.” For Aristotle and Aquinas, it follows that the presence of that sensible quality in the world – the incidental form – is one of the causes of its being taken on intentionally in the powers of the external senses – the production of an instance of *esse intentionale*. The formal cause, however, is singled out by what sensation is directed towards through the special “tending towards” of the external sense faculties. This is the epistemological naturalism that Haldane affirms about Aquinas’s theory of intentionality. In effect, this is the fundamental isomorphism between form as known and form in the world on which Aquinas’s theory of intentionality depends.

Kenny too is worried about this set of issues regarding the inner theatre of the mental. He writes as follows:

Some people think of the mind as being a kind of inner environment, the polar opposite of the external environment of the physical universe. This, I shall argue, is not the correct way to think of the mind: the boundary between the mental and the material is not the same as the boundary between inner and outer.⁵⁰

These suggestions put forward by Putnam and Haldane and shared by Kenny indicate the confluence of recent philosophy of mind with classical Aristotelian themes on mind. These accounts are useful in the attempt to make sense of Aquinas on intentionality theory.

In contemporary philosophy of mind discussions on Aristotelian theory, Myles Burnyeat is less impressed with Aristotle's account of the mental. In a much-circulated essay, "Is Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible?," Burnyeat argued for a rejection of Aristotelian ontological realism. For various reasons, Aristotle's account of mind, according to Burnyeat, is no longer credible, and hence "it ought to be junked."⁵¹ Simply put, Burnyeat argued that intentionality theory in Aristotle – and *a fortiori* in Aquinas – was dependent on a theory of ontological matter/form hylomorphism that is, in the eyes of many contemporary philosophers, neither acceptable nor understandable. Burnyeat, furthermore, appeared to argue against what he took to be the materialist/physicalist account of Aristotle put forward by Richard Sorabji.⁵² Sorabji argues that an intentional reception of a form is reducible to a physiological process.⁵³ In the following much-abbreviated schema of his essay, Burnyeat argues for three points: (1) The only way for Aristotle – and Aquinas – to be coherent on these matters is to adopt a "spiritual" reception of forms. (2) However, "1" entails that Cartesian immaterialism is a necessary condition for an adequate philosophy of mind. The Sorabji position rejecting immaterialism, therefore, cannot be justified philosophically. (3) The rise of the new science in the seventeenth century, with its theory of corpuscular matter, rejected any semblance of ontological matter/form hylomorphism. Hence, if Aristotelian philosophy of mind depends on hylomorphism – especially form – then it must be junked.

Nussbaum and Putnam wrote an extensive response to this Burnyeat challenge to Aristotle's philosophy of mind.⁵⁴ In essence, they refute, firstly, the materialist account put forward by Sorabji. Secondly, they offer what might be called a modified functionalist account of Aristotle. Functionalism claims that intentional acts are not reducible to material causes alone. The issues of functionalism *per se*, however, are beyond the limits of this chapter. Nonetheless one conceptual muddle Burnyeat points out is that intentionality theory rooted in Aristotelian realism requires some explanatory account of a theory of form.

It appears, however, that all three of these philosophers – Burnyeat, Putnam and Nussbaum – have neglected to discuss a theory of intentionality based on formal identity. In developing his theory, Aquinas offers a middle ground position between Cartesian substance dualism on the one hand – which Burnyeat appears to adopt – and the physicalism and functionalism of much contemporary materialism in the philosophy of mind on the other. Aquinas's account requires an ontological role for form, which is not reducible to functionalism.

8. The Return to Form

The role of form in Aquinas's ontology is to determine structure. Structure, in turn, determines the organization of reality. This is what Aquinas calls a formal cause. As Haldane noted: "If realism is to be vindicated, the relevant relationship between the content of a veridical state and its object is one of identity."⁵⁵ It is through an analysis of form that ontological realism and epistemological realism hold together. Ontological realism is the thesis that there exists a structured world independent of consciousness. Gustav Bergmann once called this the "truncated world." The correlative to ontological realism is epistemological realism, which claims that in perception and thought, a human knower is capable of direct awareness of the world and able to attain knowledge of its structure. In the metaphysics and philosophy of mind of Aquinas, both ontological realism and epistemological realism depend on an analysis of form, both substantial forms for sortal properties and accidental forms for incidental characteristics. Representationalism or representative realism is the theoretical rival of epistemological realism. This illustrates the wide gap between Aquinas and Descartes.

In his "A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind,"⁵⁶ Haldane develops this argument in some detail. He takes his cue from the work of Davidson, McDowell and Putnam, three philosophers who recently have defended some version of direct realism. Davidson accepts "the anomaly of the mental," which suggests the non-reducibility of the psychological to the physical. This squares with Aquinas's distinction between *esse intentionale* and *esse naturale*. McDowell and Putnam accept the double claim that any form of representationalism is false and that efficient causation alone is insufficient to explain the possibility of knowledge. These positions are different sides of the same coin. In discussing these issues, Haldane bluntly argues that "... I will proceed boldly and suggest that progress [in the philosophy of mind] may be achieved by making use of the ancient doctrine of hylomorphism."⁵⁷ This claim is in direct opposition to the Burnyeat thesis.

Haldane expresses these issues succinctly in the following passage:

Clearly input from the world is relevant and is in part at least a matter of efficient causation. However, if there is to be the sort of conformity of mind to thing which Putnam and McDowell seek, then I can only see this being provided according to an account of the sort developed by Aquinas when he writes that the intellect in act is the intelligible in act; or less scholastically, that a thought will only be of a thing when it is formally identical with it; when what we think and what is thought are the same.⁵⁸

Haldane's claim, it appears, is nothing other than a statement of what Aquinas so long ago suggested and what later philosophers, under the influence of Brentano, called a theory of intentionality. The principal statement of the theory is that knowledge is the "having of a form of another without its matter." This requires an isomorphism of *esse intentionale* with *esse naturale*. Passages from the *ST* and *De anim.*, noted earlier, explain this claim. The epistemological realism depends necessarily on the ontological realism, and the latter depends on a theory of form,

both substantial form and incidental form. Without a theory of form, Aquinas's ontological realism would disintegrate.

What does this analysis entail regarding Aquinas's theory of intentionality? One might consider the following six propositions: (1) Intentionality theory requires that the capacity to know be considered a "primitive" in Aquinas's ontology. This resembles what Chisholm wrote three decades ago that intentionality was "... a funny kind of characteristic that ordinary physical things don't have." (2) From the texts noted above, Aquinas spells out this characteristic in terms of a knower's "taking on the form of another without matter," which is the cash value of *esse intentionale* in Thomas. This is reducible to Davidson's "anomaly of the mental," which rejects reductive materialism. (3) This analysis requires that there is an isomorphism of structure between the form of the thing and the form as known in the mind. (4) One must take Aquinas literally here – the isomorphism is a strict, formal identity of form between the knower and the known. The content of knowing as exemplified in *esse intentionale* is formally identical with the quality – either sortal or incidental characteristic – exemplified in the *esse naturale* of the thing. (5) Aquinas illustrates this formal identity when he claims that "*Sensus in actu est sensibilis in actu*" and "*Intellectus in actu est intelligibilis in actu*." What makes knowledge possible is that the form known is identical with the form in the thing. This holds for both sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge. Hence form is the foundation for Aquinas's ontological and epistemological realism. (6) Efficient causality alone cannot explain the exemplification of the content in a mental act, thus formal causality is a necessary condition for perception and concept formation.

In considering the issues elucidated in the six propositions above, one can refer profitably to Haldane, who once wrote the following:

What does this mean? And how is it possible? It means that when I think of something, that which makes my thought to be the kind of thought it is ... is formally identical to that which makes the object of my thought to be the kind of thing it is. ... The form of dog [which is the foundation for the natural kind of dog] exists naturally and substantially [in *esse naturale*] in the dog, and intentionally and predicatively [in *esse intentionale*] in the thought.⁵⁹

Like Putnam and McDowell, Haldane argues that efficient causation alone cannot explain the possibility that a human knower is aware cognitively of things in the external world. Haldane writes "the difficulty is insurmountable so long as one is confined to efficient causation."⁶⁰ This is an important point necessary for an adequate analysis of intentionality theory in Thomas Aquinas.

9. A Kantian Turn: The *Vis Cogitativa* and the *Intellectus Agens*

Haldane, for one, has long advocated moving forward with these philosophy of mind studies in Aquinas. In particular, he has expressed an abiding interest in two

projects, which he considers necessary in order to explicate adequately Aquinas's philosophy of mind:

What is now needed, however, is a fully perspicuous philosophical account ... of the nature and operations of what in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition are spoken of as the "cognitive powers" [the *vis cogitativa*] and the "active intellect" [the *intellectus agens*]. That might be one of our tasks for the next century.⁶¹

It is to help move along this project Haldane identified that sparks the driving force behind this analysis into Aquinas's philosophy of mind. What follows is a brief account of how one might proceed with an analysis of the two knowing faculties or powers Haldane mentions above, the *vis cogitativa* and the *intellectus agens*.

A fully robust theory of intentionality as developed in the writings of Thomas Aquinas posits three kinds of objects of knowledge: (1) Proper and common sensibles – these are the incidental characteristics in the accidental forms of an individual. (2) Essences – these are the sortal qualities grounded in the substantial form, which in turn determines the natural kind of the individual. (3) The incidental objects of sense – these are the individual *hoc aliquid*s in the world – what Aquinas calls an individual of a natural kind or a primary substance.

To explain the possibility of the awareness of the proper and common sensibles, Aquinas develops his theory of the external senses. To explain the possibility of an awareness of sortal or essential properties, Aquinas posits the abstractive function of the *intellectus agens*. To explain the possibility of perception of the individual, which is the incidental object of sense, Aquinas expounds upon the insights of Aristotle's *De Anima* and develops a coherent account of inner sense. This account depends upon an analysis of the concepts of *intentiones non-sensatae* or *intentiones insensatae*, which are intentional structures embedded in the faculty of inner sense. The mental act of the *vis cogitativa* is a structured mental act in a manner akin to Gestalt psychology. This provides for the awareness of the individual. The philosophy of mind of inner sense in Aquinas is developed in order to explain how an awareness of an individual primary substance beyond the limits of an awareness of a bundle of proper and common sensibles is possible. This is an important aspect of Aquinas's theory of intentionality. In *ST*, Aquinas discusses the objects of sense knowledge and their respective causality in the following way:

Sense powers know things by being impressed with their likeness (*similitudo*). However, this likeness [*esse intentionale*] can be understood in three different stages.

First, *immediately and directly*; this is when the likeness of color is in the faculty of sight. This is true of all the other *proper sensibles* in their appropriate sense faculties.

Secondly, *directly, but not immediately*, as when the likeness of shape or size is in the sight. This is true of all the other *common sensibles* shared through several different senses.

Thirdly, *neither immediately nor directly*, as when the likeness of man is in the faculty of sight. He is there – i.e., in the faculty of sight – not because he is a "man" but rather because he is a colored object. [This is the *incidental object of sense*.]⁶²

An important question concerns the significance of this account of inner sense for Aquinas's theory of intentionality. It appears that Aquinas provides a modified Kantian account for explaining the perception of the individual. Since *intentiones non sensatae* cannot come about through the external senses, there must be some active contribution, what might be called a "conditioning" or a "structuring" of the mental act itself, on the part of the *vis cogitativa*. This intrinsic structure enables the *vis cogitativa* to perceive individuals as substantial wholes of a natural kind and not merely as bundles of sensations. In this case, Aquinas's epistemological account for inner sense is not a reception of a form immaterially in a simple-minded isomorphic way. There is, however, a kind of isomorphism. But it is with the essence determining principle – the *forma substantialis* – in the individual. This individual is an individual of a natural kind. The awareness of the *vis cogitativa*, through its inner structure, reaches directly to the individual primary substance.

If this analysis of inner sense is correct, then it appears that the *vis cogitativa* is an important sense faculty in Aquinas's account of perception. It is by the conditioned awareness of this faculty that the individuals of the world, which in effect are the primary substances of Aquinas's ontology, are perceived. Insofar as Aquinas's ontological realism affirms the existence of a world of individuals, he also provides the epistemological and philosophy of mind machinery necessary for a perceiver to be aware of these individuals, which in turn justifies his epistemological realism. Furthermore, because a primary substance is an individual of a kind, a natural kind in Aquinas's ontology, determined by a substantial form, the *vis cogitativa* is also aware of an individual as one belonging to a natural kind. The *vis cogitativa* explains, after a Kantian fashion, the possibility for the perception of primary substances, which are the *hoc aliquid*s of the external world. This is the epistemological realism patterned after the ontological realism, which is a world of individual primary substances grouped under natural kinds.

Without this structured awareness of an individual primary substance on the part of the *vis cogitativa*, a human knower – and *a fortiori* a theory of intentionality rooted in epistemological realism – would be deficient in at least two ways. Aquinas was not one to permit deficiencies to blossom in his philosophical theories: (1) A human knower would be unable to be aware directly of instances exemplified in the fundamental ontological category in Aquinas's metaphysics, which are individuals of natural kinds; these are, of course, primary substances. (2) A human knower would be less able to "abstract" the essence from the phantasms in the sense memory using the *intellectus agens*.

The *explicatio textus* suggested here is remarkably similar, it would seem, to the method noted above and articulated by Gibson in discussing the evolutionary development of human sense organs. It is through this evolutionary development that a human knower can make one's way around the environment. Haldane is insistent about this epistemological naturalism in Aquinas. Noted earlier was Haldane's suggestion that Aquinas and Quine are both philosophical naturalists. Aquinas's theory of intentionality is rooted in epistemological realism, which in turn is rooted in an ontological realism of a theory of individuals of natural kinds. The cognitive powers are what they are in order to be aware of the world of

individuals: (a) through proper and common sensibles; (b) through an awareness of the individual itself; (c) by abstracting the sortal qualities determining the natural kind in which the individual is grouped.

In his philosophy of mind, Aquinas, like Aristotle before him, rejects the analysis of a mental act in the Platonic mode of “knowledge as acquaintance.” This is a rejection of what Moore called the “diaphanous mental act.” Readers familiar with Moore will recall his discussion of the intentionality of mental acts in terms of their being “diaphanous” – what is sometimes referred to as the “diaphanous arrow of consciousness.”⁶³ Aristotle and Aquinas adopt what might be called a “structured mental act.” These root cognitive structures ground the possibility of a coherent knowledge of the external world.

The awareness of the individual is a necessary condition in order for Aquinas to account for the possibility of a coherent explanation of the process of abstraction with the *intellectus agens*. In Book II of *SCG*, Aquinas writes statements like the following: “... phantasms [are] prepared by the *vis cogitativa* in order that they may become actually intelligible and move the possible intellect.”⁶⁴ In addition, “... the *vis cogitativa* is ... directed to the possible intellect ... only through its act by which the phantasms are prepared, so that by the *intellectus agens* they may be made actually intelligible; in this way, the possible intellect is perfected.”⁶⁵ In the following passage, Aquinas brings in all three inner sense faculties: “It is through the *vis cogitativa*, together with the imagination and the sense memory, that the phantasms are prepared to receive the addition of the *intellectus agens*, whereby they are made actually intelligible.”⁶⁶

Adopting a “structured mental act” entails two important intentional structures in Aquinas’s philosophy of mind: (1) The *intellectus agens*. (2) The *vis cogitativa*. Both of these intentional structures are necessary conditions in order for Aquinas to provide an account of an awareness of essential properties. Both transcend direct data from the external senses. The *intellectus agens* is the power of abstraction. In discussing Gilson’s account of Aquinas’s philosophy of mind, John Peterson once wrote that “the senses carry a message which they cannot themselves interpret.”⁶⁷ Peterson and Gilson refer only to the *intellectus agens*. It appears that the *vis cogitativa* must be included in this cognitive characteristic proposed by Gilson. Hence the working of the *vis cogitativa* enables the *intellectus agens* to engage in the process of abstraction. If the *vis cogitativa* were not aware of individuals of a natural kind, then the abstractive process would be almost an empty process scattered among bunches of discrete and unconnected sensibles. The *vis cogitativa* prepares the way for abstraction. Without these innate intentional structures, one on the level of perception and the other on the level of abstraction, Aquinas would be unable to develop a coherent theory of intentionality. This important function of this faculty of inner sense is hardly “an embarrassment,” which is a position Dorothea Frede proposed recently.⁶⁸

The possibility of an awareness of individual things is accounted for by means of the structured intentional mental act of the *vis cogitativa*. The external sensorium is aware of unified wholes of proper and common sensibles. At this point in the process – that is, the external sensorium – Aquinas’s account is similar structurally

to the bundle view paradigm articulated in British empiricism by Berkeley and Hume. The *vis cogitativa*, however, is aware of the primary substance as a primary substance – an individual. The mental act of the *vis cogitativa* renders the intentional awareness of “unified collection of qualities” from the external sensorium into an intentional awareness of an individual of a natural kind. In effect, it is because of the *vis cogitativa* that Aquinas can distinguish between sensation and perception, and, *a fortiori*, transcend the limits of modern and contemporary British empiricism exemplified in the writings of Berkeley and Hume, among others.

This *explicatio textus* of Aquinas on the *vis cogitativa*, therefore, offers a way to account for the intentional awareness of individuals independent of and quite different from the reflexive act of the intellect, which Aquinas discusses in the *ST*.⁶⁹ On the level of sense perception utilizing the internal sense of the *vis cogitativa* conjoined with the notion of *intentiones non-sensatae*, Aquinas pushes the boundary of traditional empiricism. In this way, he would in principle accept the category difference between sensation and perception affirmed by Reid. Aquinas, however, through the structured mental act of the *vis cogitativa*, goes beyond what Reid proposed on perception.

In summary, therefore, Aquinas’s theory of intentionality provides a way for a human knower to be aware of all three generic categories of objects of knowledge. The proper and common sensibles are known through the external senses and the *sensus communis*. The intellect, by means of the abstractive power of the *intellectus agens* is aware of essential, sortal properties. The *vis cogitativa*, by means of a structured awareness similar to the mental act of Gestalt psychology, is aware of the individual primary substances of the world. This last claim is spelled out in some detail in his *Commentary on Aristotle’s On the Soul*. Both the *intellectus agens* and the *vis cogitativa* are cognitive structures postulated by Aquinas as a means to explain the possibility of knowledge and are central to his theory of intentionality.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, what Aquinas adds to the contemporary discussion of intentionality theory in the philosophy of mind are the following claims: (1) An ontological and not a linguistic theory of intentionality; this provides for the ontological existence of the *esse naturale/esse intentionale* distinction. (2) A formal identity or isomorphism of knower and known; this is the cash value of the function of the *esse naturale/esse intentionale* distinction. (3) A necessary condition in sensation theory for more than efficient causality. (4) A denial of the “inner theatre of the mind” model for explaining sense knowledge. (5) An argument for direct realism in opposition to representationalism. (6) A modified view of epistemological naturalism. (7) A positing of intentional structures for inner sense that provides for the awareness of an individual of a natural kind. (8) An abstractive process to account for human knowledge of sortal properties.

The analysis put forward in this essay is rooted in Aquinas's *ST* and his *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Soul*, which is a treatise that indeed merits the utmost attention by contemporary philosophers of mind. Haldane suggested several years ago that "... in their own ways influential figures such as McDowell and Putnam have been working towards positions very close to that of Aristotle and Aquinas."⁷⁰ Kenny also wrote: "I believe as a matter of fact, that the clearest insight into the nature of the mind is to be obtained from the Aristotelian viewpoint."⁷¹ If this conceptual convergence is correct, then the title of this inquiry, "From Aquinas to Brentano and Beyond," is more than of historical interest. Possibly the insights of medieval philosophy, especially those found in the texts of Thomas Aquinas, can assist practicing philosophers of mind to go beyond Brentano and his successors in the analysis of a coherent thesis of intentionality.

Notes

An early version of this chapter was delivered as a keynote address at a conference on intentionality theory at Marquette University. The author is grateful to James South, Richard Taylor and Norris Clarke for their helpful comments.

- 1 John Haldane, *Mind, Metaphysics and Value in the Thomistic and Analytical Tradition* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).
- 2 Haldane, "Analytical Thomism: A Prefatory Note," *The Monist* 80:4 (October, 1997), 485–86; also, Haldane, "What Future Has Catholic Philosophy?" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 71 (1997), Suppl. 77–90.
- 3 Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 80.
- 4 Kenny, "Aquinas: Intentionality," in *Philosophy Through its Past*, Ted Honderich, ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 82.
- 5 Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Text of Aristotle's *De Anima*," in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*, Martha C. Nussbaum and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 1995), 4.
- 6 Dominik Perler, *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).
- 7 Franz Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, in *Realism and the Background to Phenomenology*, Roderick M. Chisholm, ed., D. B. Terrell, trans. (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960), 39–41.
- 8 Haldane, "History: Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy of Mind," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind*, Samuel Guttenplan, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 335.
- 9 Roderick M. Chisholm, "Intentionality and the Theory of Signs," *Philosophical Studies* 3 (1952), 56.
- 10 Jaegwon Kim, "Chisholm on Intentionality," in *The Philosophy of Roderick Chisholm*, Louis Hahn, ed. (Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, 1997), 364.
- 11 Chisholm, "Brentano on Descriptive Psychology and the Intentional," in *Phenomenology and Existentialism*, Edward N. Lee and Maurice Mandelbaum, eds. (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 1–23.
- 12 While it is true that Aquinas, like Moore and Russell, accepted the act/object distinction, nonetheless it is also true that Aquinas's account of a "structured" mental act is opposed fundamentally to the "diaphanous" mental act as espoused by Moore, Russell and many other early twentieth-century British philosophers. For a discussion

- of this difference, see Anthony J. Lisska, "Deely and Geach on Abstractionism in Thomist Epistemology," *The Thomist*, 37 (July 1973), 548–68.
- 13 G. E. M. Anscombe and P. T. Geach, *Three Philosophers: Aristotle, Aquinas and Frege* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961), 95 ff. The term "*esse intentionale*" occurs frequently in a number of places in the texts of Aquinas.
- 14 Nussbaum and Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima*.
- 15 Haldane, "Brentano's Problem," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 35.
- 16 Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London: Routledge, 1921), 14–15.
- 17 Peter Simons, "Introduction to the Second Edition," Franz Brentano, *Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint*, Rancurello, Terrell and McAlister, eds. (London: Routledge, 1995), xxii.
- 18 Edmund Husserl, *Ideen III*, in *Phenomenology and Existentialism*, Robert C. Solomon, ed. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1972), 187.
- 19 Roderick Chisholm, "'Intentionality and the Mental', a correspondence with Wilfred Sellars," *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. II, H. Feigl et al., eds. (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), 524.
- 20 Kim, "Chisholm on Intentionality," 366.
- 21 Wilfred Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality* (New York, NY: The Humanities Press, 1963), 47 ff.
- 22 See Anthony J. Lisska, "Aquinas on the *Vis Cogitativa*: Is it an Embarrassment?" Central Division Meetings, The American Philosophical Association, Chicago, Ill., April 2004; "Thomas Aquinas on *Phantasia*: Rooted in but Transcending Aristotle's *De Anima*," in *Aquinas' Sources*, Timothy Smith, ed. (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine Press, 2001).
- 23 Cf. *Commentary on the Soul*, no. 396 ff.
- 24 Scott MacDonald, "Theory of Knowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 160.
- 25 John Haldane, "A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind," in *Form and Matter: Themes in Contemporary Metaphysics*, David S. Oderberg, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 54.
- 26 *Commentary on St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*, 15: 17–19, found in *Aquinas: Selected Philosophical Writings*, Timothy McDermott, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 192–93.
- 27 Haldane, "Insight, Inference and Intellection," in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 75 (1999), 38.
- 28 Quoted by Haldane in his "Forms of Thought," in *The Philosophy of Roderick Chisholm*, 149.
- 29 Anscombe and Geach, 95.
- 30 *STI*, q. 14, a. 1.
- 31 *Commentary on the Soul*, no. 553.
- 32 Haldane, "Return to Form," 54.
- 33 *STI*, q. 78, a. 3.
- 34 In addition to human knowledge, Aquinas considers both divine and angelic knowledge. However, there is textual evidence that no *esse spirituale* is identical with an *esse intentionale*. In addition, the purpose of this essay is to elucidate the intentionality thesis as found in the terrestrial human condition. Thus there is no present concern with how disembodied souls, angels or God might have knowledge.
- 35 *STI*, q. 56, a. 2, ad 3.

- 36 *ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 1.
- 37 Anscombe and Geach, 95.
- 38 *ST* I, q. 75, a. 1, ad 2. For a recent discussion of the *antiqui naturales* see Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 30–34.
- 39 William Kneale, “Analysis of Perceiving,” in *Perception*, F. N. Sibley, ed. (London: Methuen, 1971), 68.
- 40 Haldane, “Forms of Thought,” 167.
- 41 Haldane, “Forms of Thought,” 167.
- 42 Paul Horwich discusses folk psychology in the following way: “According to folk psychology (our pre-scientific picture of the human mind) each normal person has a cluster of cognitive capacities and faculties whose interaction with one another helps to explain that person’s linguistic activity. This collection of faculties includes the knowledge of some language, methods of arriving at beliefs, a collection of beliefs, a set of desires and ways of changing them, a system that derives decisions and intentions from beliefs and desires, a method of converting intention into action, and many other things. The possession of these systems, and their specific contents, are confidently inferred from everyday behaviour.” Paul Horwich, “Chomsky Versus Quine on the Analytic-Synthetic Distinction,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society: New Series*, 92 pt. 1 (1992), 96.
- 43 Paul Glenn, *Criteriology* (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder, 1948), 133.
- 44 I wish to acknowledge the assistance of my Denison colleague, Harry Heft, in this discussion of James Gibson’s work.
- 45 *QDP*, q. 7, a. 9.
- 46 Haldane, “Insight, Inference and Intellection,” 39.
- 47 Haldane, “Insight, Inference and Intellection,” 43.
- 48 Haldane, “Insight, Inference and Intellection,” 41.
- 49 These insights came from discussions with Professor Haldane and his suggestions regarding the work of Hilary Putnam on Aristotle’s theory of mind. I am indebted to Professor Haldane for providing these illustrations.
- 50 Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London: Routledge, 1993; 1994), 15.
- 51 In Nussbaum and Rorty, 15–26.
- 52 Richard Sorabji, “Intentionality and Physiological Processes: Aristotle’s Theory of Sense-Perception,” in Nussbaum and Rorty, 195–225.
- 53 For a discussion of Sorabji’s position, see James T. H. Martin, “Sense and Intentionality: Aristotle and Aquinas,” in *Aquinas on Mind and Intellect: New Essays*, Jeremiah Hackett, ed. (Oakdale, NY: Dowling University Press, 1996), 175–84.
- 54 Martha C. Nussbaum and Hilary Putnam, “Changing Aristotle’s Mind,” in Nussbaum and Rorty, 27–56.
- 55 Haldane, “Insight, Inference and Intellection,” 40.
- 56 Haldane, “A Return to Form,” 40–64.
- 57 Haldane, “A Return to Form,” 41.
- 58 Haldane, “A Return to Form,” 54.
- 59 Haldane, “A Return to Form,” 54.
- 60 Haldane, “A Return to Form,” 56.
- 61 Haldane, “Insight, Inference and Intellection,” 43.
- 62 *ST* I, q. 17, a. 2. (Italics not in the original.)
- 63 Moore, “The Refutation of Idealism,” in *Philosophical Studies* (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Company, 1965), 25.

- 64 SCG II, ch. 76.
- 65 SCG II, ch. 73.
- 66 SCG II, ch. 60.
- 67 John Peterson, *Realism and Logical Atomism* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1976), 7.
- 68 Dorothea Frede, "Aquinas on *Phantasia*," in *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, Perler, ed., 170.
- 69 For a thorough discussion of this topic, see James B. South, "Intellectual Knowledge of Material Particulars in Thomas Aquinas: An Introduction," in *Aquinas on Mind and Intellect*, Hackett, ed., 85–115.
- 70 Haldane, "Insight, Inference and Intellection," 42.
- 71 Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 18.

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Chapter Nine

Aquinas, Finnis and Non-Naturalism

Craig Paterson

1. Introduction

John Finnis's work on natural law ethics (developed and refined with the help of several key collaborators, most notably Germain Grisez and Joseph Boyle), over the past three decades, has been a source of controversy (both meta-ethical and normative) in neo-Thomist circles.¹ In analytical circles too, especially in analytical jurisprudence, his work has also been a source of controversy. (I am not here alluding to populist controversies that have resulted from the use of some of his arguments in the "public square" on the topics of abortion, homosexuality, coitus, and so on, although they too are phenomena that stem from the broad reach of his discourse.)

Finnis's work is oftentimes a genuinely interesting source of controversy because he is a thinker who has challenged a common key assumption of both neo-Thomism and Analytical Philosophy, namely, that a natural law ethics (at least one worthy of being called such) *must* be based on an appeal to some form of ethical naturalism – that natural law is, at bottom, an ethics that seeks to derive or infer normative "ought" type statements from descriptive "is" type statements. Coming to terms with the nature of Finnis's work has been a challenge for scholars from different philosophical traditions because his own writing has drawn from a variety of different sources and influences. He has, for example, used many insights drawn from or inspired by Aquinas to challenge some of the neo-orthodoxies of contemporary moral philosophy, especially its enduring infatuation with different forms of emotivism or subjectivism. On the other hand, Finnis's work has also been influenced by the weave of meta-ethical discourse arising out of twentieth-century analytical philosophy.²

Because of Finnis's appropriation of influences – both Thomist and Analytic – this would seem to be more than enough to classify him as an *Analytical Thomist*, at least according to the guidelines given by John Haldane, whom in 1997 first coined the phrase to describe the crisscross of influence between Thomism and Analytical Philosophy.³ When looking at the work of Finnis and then reflecting on the term *Analytical Thomism*, it strikes me as both noteworthy and praiseworthy that the term's frame of reference (at least as used by Haldane) is decidedly latitudinarian. There are no strict tests laid down for inclusion or exclusion. Thus when applied to a consideration of some of the major divisions being used in contemporary meta-ethical theory, the term's aegis is broad enough to include an objectivist-cognitivist

approach to meta-ethics that could be either naturalistic or non-naturalistic (I would, however, strongly doubt that the term could be further broadened to include any style of ethical theory that rejects the claim that ethics is ultimately grounded on an objectively structured moral order accessible to human reason).

An examination of the contribution of Finnis to natural law ethics, then, is apropos for a collection of essays on Analytical Thomism because he is recognized as a jurisprud-philosopher whose mode of approaching philosophy, with its emphasis on the unaided or autonomous use of human reason, is helpful in promoting an understanding of natural law ethics across different philosophical traditions. His approach is also especially useful in the context of trying to make a natural law based ethics more accessible to people who reject the traditional allegiance of natural law with the truths of revealed theology (thus taking the sting out of the quip, once popular among secular moralists, that natural law theory was “baptized reason”). He is well-known for his clear commitment to arguing for the open accessibility of a natural law based ethics thereby defending it against the claim that it cannot function as a basis for “publicly reasonable” discourse in contemporary pluralistic society.⁴ This points to an important time honored use of the term “natural” that renders intelligible Finnis’s commitment to the phrase “natural law,” despite being a meta-ethical non-naturalist – the contrast between the “natural” and the “supernatural.” Natural law *qua* natural should not be conceptually confused with any form of supernaturally imposed extrinsicism – whether of divine reason (the eternal logos) or of the divine will (divine command theory). Finnis’s work then is “ripe” for engagement in a book devoted to an exploration of different themes in Analytical Thomism.

In this chapter I seek to examine the credibility of Finnis’s basic stance on Aquinas that while many neo-Thomists are meta-ethically naturalistic in their understanding of natural law theory (for example, Heinrich Rommen, Henry Veatch, Ralph McInerney, Russell Hittinger, Benedict Ashley and Anthony Lisska), Aquinas’s own meta-ethical framework avoids the “pitfall” of naturalism.⁵ On examination, the short of it is that I find Finnis’s account (while adroit) wanting in the interpretation stakes vis-à-vis other accounts of Aquinas’s meta-ethical foundationalism. I think that the neo-Thomists are basically right to argue that for Aquinas we cannot really understand objective truths about moral standards unless we derive them from our intellectual knowledge of natural facts as given to us by the essential human nature that we have. (A position, I think, very close to that of Aristotelian-functionalism.)

While I find Finnis’s interpretative position on Aquinas wanting, I go on to argue that his own attachment to non-naturalism is justified and should not be jettisoned. Because I think non-naturalism important to the future tenability of a viable natural law ethics (an ethics that is *both* cognitive and objectivist), I argue that Finnis should, so to speak, “beef up” his “fundamental option” for non-naturalism and more fully avail himself of certain argumentative strategies available in its defense, argumentative strategies that are inspired by the analytical philosophy of G. E. Moore.

2. Naturalism and Neo-Scholasticism

Some neo-scholastic natural law thinkers like Heinrich Rommen, Henry Veatch and Ralph McInerny, according to Finnis, invoke the authority of Aquinas in support of their own naturalistic meta-ethical reading of natural law fundamentals.⁶ A common core of argumentation running through their approaches to natural law theory is that they all, ultimately, seek to derive moral norms from their interpretation of factual-descriptive propositions about human nature. According to their shared approach, practical reasoning (*ratio practica*) – reasoning about what ought-to-be-done by the agent – necessarily hinges on what is variously termed “theoretical” or “speculative” reasoning – reasoning about the “is” of human nature. They argue that we derive ethical norms from our prior factual-theoretical knowledge of what human beings are *in essentialibus*. We understand the origination of ethical norms when we understand the natural ordering of our inclinations as given to us by our ontological make-up.

For Finnis, many neo-scholastics take it as a near given that human acts in conformity with the trajectories of nature (as theoretically understood), are morally good, and acts not in conformity with nature, so understood, are morally bad. They argue that Aquinas’s first principle of practical reason – “bonum est faciendum et prosequendum et malum vitandum” (good is to be done and pursued and evil avoided) – is a moral command incumbent on the agent to pursue and promote the given trajectories or functions of human nature.⁷ Thus we establish what is normatively good for us by metaphysical inquiry into the structures of human nature.⁸

Regarding the metaphysical naturalism of neo-scholasticism, Finnis thinks that there is good reason to reject its tenability as a meta-ethical foundation. Post-Enlightenment philosophy has, he believes, rightly rejected the soundness of any appeal to the metaphysical facts of nature as being an adequate meta-ethical basis for warranting the inference of valid ethical norms. For Finnis, the meta-ethical approach of neo-scholasticism falls afoul of this charge because it illicitly attempts to derive (infer/deduce) moral norms from a series of factual-theoretical premises about what is.⁹

Finnis and the neo-scholastics at least agree that the *locus classicus* of the dispute over the tenability of naturalism can be traced back to a key passage in David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*:

In every system of morality I have hitherto met with, I have always remark’d that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz’d to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions *is* and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought* or *ought not*. This change is imperceptible, but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought* or *ought not* expresses some new relation or affirmation, ’tis necessary that it should be observ’d and explain’d; and at the same time a reason should be given for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others which are entirely different from it.¹⁰

Hume's central point was that if you want to give a valid argument for a normative conclusion, you will need to start, at the very outset, with a normative premise. Finnis certainly interprets Hume as meaning something like this. From non-normative premises (about what is), we cannot derive a normative conclusion (about what ought-to-be or conversely about what ought-not-to-be).¹¹ Consider here what D. J. O'Connor in his *Aquinas and the Natural Law* has to say on the matter. While Finnis would reject O'Connor's charge of naturalism as directed against Aquinas, he would surely concur with the following:

The whole discussion [deriving an "ought" from an "is"] seems to confuse two senses of "good" as (i) what is sought after, and (ii) what ought to be sought after Granted that the good life for man must somehow be grounded in human nature, how do we argue from the facts of human nature to the values of morality? As Hume notoriously showed, the gap between fact and value cannot be bridged by logical argument.¹²

The key problem with naturalism, for Finnis (and O'Connor), is its attempt to perform an untenable leap between fact and value, between the descriptive and the normative. Finnis rejects any neo-scholastic approach that breaches this key post-Enlightenment meta-ethical axiom.¹³

Finnis thus faces a challenge. If this key axiom is not ill-founded, as he believes, then either Aquinas, so interpreted, is guilty of breaching it or the neo-scholastic interpretation of Aquinas must be faulty. For Finnis, O'Connor is right in his assessment of the fact/value distinction but wrong in attributing a naturalistic breach of that distinction to Aquinas.¹⁴ O'Connor, so to speak, "sins" but once. The neo-scholastics, however, "sin" twice. They are wrong in their rejection of the central validity of the fact/value distinction and they are also wrong in their claim that Aquinas was, like them, a meta-ethical naturalist. This therefore places Finnis in the position of having to tackle head-on some deeply held "misunderstandings" about Aquinas's meta-ethical foundations. As Finnis forthrightly states in his later work *Aquinas*:

Nor, of course, can the genuine first practical principles be "speculative" ("theoretical", that is, non-practical) propositions about what is the case, e.g. about human nature. *Some commentators on Aquinas have imagined that they are such propositions* In short, the "ought" of first practical principles is not deducible from "is", whether from "is willed by God" or from "has been prescribed by me myself".¹⁵

The thrust of Finnis's objection to metaphysical (anthropological, theological ...) naturalism can be best illustrated here by means of an example. Imagine that you are trying to prove the status of an ethical proposition:

- (a) *I ought to do X.*

Imagine also that you are a metaphysical naturalist.

The premise by which you seek to derive (a) is:

- (b) *My essence tells me to pursue X.*

(a) does not follow from (b).

To make a valid inference an extra premise must be added:

- (c) *If my essence tells me to pursue X then I ought to pursue X.*

The problem with the leap from (b) to (a) in the eyes of Finnis and many analytical philosophers is, I think, neatly described in an older 1940s text, A. N. Prior's, *Logic and the Basis of Ethics*. A moral norm cannot be derived unless moral norms are already included as part of the premises of the argument. The conclusion of a valid syllogism cannot contain terms that do not appear in the premises. So a proposition involving an "ought" cannot be deduced from premises that are, so to speak, "ought-less."¹⁶ Finnis would, I think, accept the thrust of this description of naturalism because it helps us see why attempts to establish ethical norms naturalistically are thought mistaken. Instead, for Finnis (if we are to avoid the pitfalls of emotivism or subjectivism), we need to begin the ethical journey via a different route – with practical reason's direct unmediated apprehension of basic human goods for us.¹⁷ For Finnis, these goods are directly grasped via the operation of practical reason – that is, reasoning about what is to be done. Practical reason, as Finnis interprets it, furnishes its own starting points for its own operations. Normative beginnings are not supplied to it as a product generated by way of conclusion from prior speculative inquiry. When reasoning practically about what kinds of action are worthy of choice, we are able to spontaneously grasp the significance of these goods and pursue them as the intelligible starting points that underpin the pursuit of all worthwhile human action.¹⁸

3. Naturalism and Aquinas

Fortunately, according to Finnis, Aquinas himself was not guilty of an attempt to derive ethics from truths first established and asserted by prior theoretical inquiry. He did not attempt to derive or infer the starting points of ethical thinking from factual-theoretical premises. Normative starting points are *sui generis*. Aquinas, correctly understood, is really a defender of what might be called the "autonomy of ethics" position, a position which rejects the claim that our understanding of moral starting points can be derived from (or reduced to) a factual examination of human nature. As Finnis states:

So [for Aquinas] the epistemic source of the first practical principles is not human nature or a prior, theoretical understanding of human nature (though a theoretical knowledge of the efficacy, as means, of certain choosable conduct is relevant to our knowledge of the first practical principles). Rather, the epistemic relationship is the reverse: any deep understanding of human nature, that is, of the capacities which will be fulfilled by action which participates in and realizes those goods, those perfections, is an understanding which has amongst its sources our primary, undemonstrated but genuine practical knowledge of those goods and purposes.¹⁹

Finnis acknowledges that Aquinas usually wrote as a theologian or metaphysician. Consequently it is sometimes difficult to disentangle the normative basis of his natural law ethics from his discussion of other (speculative) disciplines.²⁰ His discussion of practical reason, however, for Finnis, holds the key to understanding his basic ethical approach. For Aquinas, something is good, right, or just "by

nature” only to the extent that it is in accordance with the measure of reason, specifically practical reason.²¹ Aquinas distinguished between two forms of human reasoning – speculative reasoning and practical reasoning. In drawing a distinction between the speculative and the practical, Aquinas was acknowledging that the intellect has two distinct modes of engagement and each mode has its own unique and non-demonstrative first principle. Finnis draws heavily upon *ST* I–II, q. 94.²² The first principle of speculative reasoning (FPSR) is the principle of non-contradiction, “the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time.” The first principle of practical reasoning (FPPR) is “good is to be done and pursued and evil is to be avoided.” These two self-evident principles address different primary concerns. Speculative reasoning is concerned with “what-is.” Practical reasoning is concerned with “what-is-to-be.” According to Finnis, this division was adhered to by Aquinas because he understood that the ethical quest was thoroughly practical in all dimensions of its genesis and operation. Norms, for Aquinas, are not derived from theoretical inquiry but from prior norms traceable back to FPPR. As Finnis states:

... for Aquinas, the way to discover what is morally right (virtue) and wrong (vice) is to ask, not what is in accordance with human nature, but what is reasonable. And this quest will eventually bring one back to the *underived* first principles of practical reasonableness, principles which make no reference at all to human nature, but only to human good ... the “natural” is, for the point of view of his ethics, a speculative appendage added by way of metaphysical reflection, *not* a counter with which to advance either to or from the practical *prima principia per se nota*.²³

A key problem with neo-scholastic interpretations, for Finnis, concerns the meaning of FPPR. Finnis does not interpret this as being a moral imperative. Instead, it is a “not-yet-moral” directive for human action. In a manner analogous to FPSR, a principle presupposed in all speculative thinking, FPPR is presupposed in all acts of practical thinking (whether morally good or not). In consequence, the principle, for Finnis, cannot be interpreted as a moral command, for not all practical thinking is moral in nature. FPPR refers not to what is morally good but to all forms of what is considered intelligibly worthwhile for agents to pursue. If it were a moral principle commanding us to do moral good and avoid moral evil, Finnis thinks it would lose its credibility as a genuine self-evident principle presupposed in all acts of practical reasoning.²⁴

On Finnis’s interpretation of Aquinas, insofar as Aquinas is viewed as a philosopher (operating under the light of natural reason, and not as a theologian presupposing supernatural revelation), the good to be pursued in general (happiness; flourishing; imperfect beatitude), is really a composite of several non-reducible and basic goods that are directly (*per se nota*) apprehended and found to be intrinsically fulfilling for us – goods like human life, knowledge and friendship.²⁵ How then do we move from our apprehension of FPPR understood as “X (human life, friendship...) is a good to be pursued and preserved...” to the moral realm? For Finnis, Aquinas bases his understanding of morality upon the degree of full practical reasonableness instantiated in the exercise of human choice.

The exercise of human choice is key to the transition between the directive and the morally normative. We recognize the basic good of practical reasonableness itself and also its architectonic role in guiding all worthwhile human action.²⁶ Morally good choices are choices that openly and expansively pursue and promote the *bona humana*. Conversely bad choices are choices that unduly limit or foreclose our pursuit of these goods. In short, morally right action = practically reasonable action and morally wrong action = practically unreasonable action.

4. Aquinas the Non-Naturalist?

As I said in my introduction, Finnis's account of Aquinas's ethics is nothing if not adroit. Nor can he be accused of approaching his analysis of Aquinas without gusto or without being inspired by a deep intellectual love for his work. It is not his lack of familiarity with Aquinas's work or his lack of intellectual passion that is in question. Instead what leads me to question and ultimately reject the credibility of his non-naturalistic interpretation of Aquinas is what I would call the "lens of bias" by which he approaches his subject matter. Finnis (spurred on, no doubt, by laudable motives of "intellectual rescue") distorts the historical Aquinas by interpreting Aquinas as if he (Finnis) were wearing an analytical pair of spectacles, enabling himself, so equipped, to "reconstruct" Aquinas as a post-Enlightenment compatible thinker.

I say this, of course, as one very sympathetic to some of the meta-ethical goals of Finnis's project. Alas, his project – of establishing and defending a non-naturalistic foundationalism – cannot be anchored in Aquinas's work. Without claiming the traditional authority of Aquinas in support, Finnis's own project must stand justified, if justified it is, upon its own free-standing merits.

The main claim I wish to challenge in Finnis's account is his assertion that practical reason and speculative reason are very different in their respective modes such that the practical, with regard to the structure of its own operations, functions autonomously and cannot be regarded as a dependent form of reason parasitical on the speculative.²⁷ In my understanding of Aquinas, however, speculative reasoning is heavily implicated in the structural make up of the practical intellect, for there is, *in substantialibus*, only one intellect not two.²⁸ Finnis formally acknowledges this unity, but time and again he treats the two as if they were *de facto* very different kinds of mental power.²⁹ Finnis, in his reading, I think, effectively bifurcates the substantial unity of the human intellect such that there is a near severance of the deep organic relationship that, for Aquinas, exists between the speculative and the practical.

Finnis fuels this bifurcation with his tendency to equate the speculative with the purely theoretical, especially with *scientia* – systematic theoretical inquiry into the nature of the physical constitution of the natural world, of the nature of metaphysical properties, and so on.³⁰ Finnis thus tends to neglect the reality, for Aquinas, that "speculation" can be about the ordinary data or facts of everyday human experience. For Aquinas, truth adequated towards action cannot be divorced

from truth adequated towards “that which is” for understanding of the former is contingent on our understanding of the latter (even if only in a very simple and unsystematic way). As Aquinas states in his *ST I* q. 79, a. 11:

On the contrary, The speculative intellect *by extension* becomes practical But one power is not changed into another. Therefore the speculative and practical intellects are not distinct powers.³¹

Aquinas then answers:

The reason of which is that ... *what is accidental* to the nature of the object of a power, *does not differentiate that power*; for it is accidental to a thing *Now, to a thing apprehended by the intellect, it is accidental whether it be directed to operation or not ...*³²

Due to this emphasis on the grand autonomy of practical reason, Finnis effectively seeks to turn an *accidental difference* between the speculative and the practical intellect into a *substantial difference* thereby tacitly creating what amounts to a distinct “nature” for each. This interpretative move is central to Finnis’s understanding of Aquinas because of his analytical concern that there must be a fundamental difference between how we come to have knowledge of facts and how we come to have knowledge of values. Now Finnis argues that what he is really doing here is simply recognizing an epistemic distinction between different modes of knowing and that he is not therefore asserting a quite different point about the two intellects having any substantially different ontological foundation.³³ As John Haldane succinctly states, however, when considering the relationship of epistemology to metaphysics in Aquinas’s thought, there can be “no epistemology without ontology.”³⁴ This “carving-off” of the epistemic as a discrete consideration, independent of any ontological fall-out, is alien to Aquinas’s thought, because, for Aquinas, an epistemic division of this kind between the speculative and the practical would have deep ontological ramifications – it would *ontologically entail* a *per se difference* and not just a *per accidens* difference between the speculative and the practical intellects. Aquinas, as stated above *ST I*, q. 79, a. 11, would explicitly reject any substantial difference between the speculative and the practical. Such a difference would not be circumstantial or accidental.

Finnis’s bifurcation of the speculative and practical also informs his interpretation of *ST I-II*, q. 94. In his attempt to maintain the epistemic autonomy of the practical from the speculative, Finnis passes over the structural dependency that exists in Aquinas’s article between our knowledge of FPSR and our coming to know FPPR. The truth of FPSR is first understood by the intellect prior to its recognition of the truth of FPPR. Good is to be done and evil avoided, presupposes the truth of non-contradiction. A good, therefore, cannot be both good and evil in the same respect. Finnis seeks to denude Aquinas’s FPPR of any *necessary* structural dependency on the recognition of prior speculative truth, but this is not Aquinas’s position, for FPPR can only have a claim to be self-evident if FPSR is

presupposed in FPPR's initial apprehension and subsequent application. Without the recognition of speculative truth in the former there could be no truth as directed towards action in the latter. As Aquinas states in the body of *ST I-II*, q. 94:

Now a certain order is to be found in those things that are apprehended universally. For that which, before aught else, falls under apprehension, is "being," the notion of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends. Wherefore the first indemonstrable principle is that "the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time," which is based on the notion of "being" and "not-being": and on this principle all others are based, as is stated in *Metaph. iv*, text. 9.³⁵

Finnis supposes that a claim of *per se notum* self-evidence concerning a first principle cannot entail the initial epistemic dependency of one principle on the other. Now Finnis would be right if Aquinas were speaking directly and not by analogy about the status of FPPR. Yet for Aquinas, the self-evidence of FPPR is mentioned by *analogy only* in comparison with FPSR in order to explain *how it seems* that our knowledge of FPPR *appears* so immediate and direct. Perspective here is all important, and too much reliance on the strength of this analogy is apt to mislead. When viewed in *own domain* FPPR can be said to have a *per se notum* status, but by *analogy only*, because, strictly speaking, when viewed absolutely, against the wider *dominium eminens* of reason in general, the analogy breaks down due to the structural dependency of FPPR on FPSR. Use of this analogy in *ST I-II*, q. 94, therefore, due to its relative weakness, cannot be expected to bear the weight of argument that Finnis seeks to attribute to it in his interpretation of Aquinas's meta-ethics.

Finnis's own meta-ethical commitments help explain his position that practical reason is said to apprehend, independent of speculative inquiry, what is good. Aquinas, however, was not committed to such a position. As Aquinas states in the body of *ST I-II*, q. 94:

Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil, the nature of a contrary, hence it is that all those things to which man has a natural inclination, are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance. Wherefore according to the order of natural inclinations, is the order of the precepts of the natural law.

Here again, I think, we encounter another statement in the *Summa theologiae* that expresses the structural order of entailment that exists between the two intellects. The practical intellect is not free to regard any old good as good. It is, in its own operations, dependent upon prior conclusions reached by the operations of the speculative intellect. The aspect of the good of a thing is determined by its fittingness to a natural end (and the ordering of sub-ends to a natural end). Our speculative intellect first recognizes knowledge of our natural human ends. Only then is it possible to speak of something being good because it is fitting to a natural human end. For Aquinas, the speculative apprehends the inclinations of our nature, not in any exalted sense of grand metaphysical theory but in a more commonplace

sense of grasping basic conceptual patterns about the ways in which human nature is ordered. Practical reason takes these conclusions of speculative reasoning as its own practical starting points, now viewed under the aspect of good, as directed towards action. This, is, I think, the thrust of Aquinas's thinking here, a stance that is actually thoroughly Aristotelian in shape. What underpins Aquinas's account of the ordering of the natural inclinations is basically Aristotle's *ergon* argument presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. For Aquinas, like Aristotle, our understanding of what is good is structurally dependent on our speculative understanding of the functions of human nature (again, not necessarily speculative in any schematic grand sense). This, of course, is hardly surprising given that Aquinas was writing a commentary on Aristotle's ethics, his *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, while he was also engaged in writing the second part of the *ST*.³⁶ In that text he comments with approval on many of Aristotle's meta-ethical conclusions.

Another claim that, I think, does not express Aquinas's position concerning the status of FPPR is Finnis's assertion that FPPR is a not-yet-moral principle, for not all practical thinking is moral in nature. If it were a moral principle it would lose its claim to be self-evident. Firstly, Finnis's interpretation downplays Aquinas's explicit use of authoritatively commanding language in the context of his discussion on the foundations of natural law in *ST* I-II q. 94 – time and again Aquinas states that *nature law prescribes* – law is a rule or measure and to prescribe is to command. For Aquinas it would be terminologically bizarre to say that a prescription of the natural law determines the scope of all our subsequent human actions and is yet pre-moral. Finnis's focus on the grammatical "is-to-be" is really an attempt to fashion a pivotal change in meaning on the turn of a phrase that could as equally well be rendered "Do good and avoid evil" or "You ought to do good and avoid evil." Secondly, his interpretation is based on the misapprehension – that since all human action whether morally good or morally bad presupposes the use of practical reason – the FPPR cannot itself be a moral principle. This puzzle between the moral and the not-yet-moral only emerges, however, if we assert that the entire moral realm must axiomatically be equated with the exercise of human choice. This way of understanding the scope of morality, however, is not Aquinas's, and is decidedly more modernist in its pedigree. For Aquinas, simply because we cannot but help participate in a good, does not therefore entail that our participation in that good is not itself a moral act, responding to a moral command, even if it is not possible to do otherwise and yet remain human. Thus to participate by our very being in the kind of good practical reason, is itself to be in the moral realm even if it is, ontologically speaking, a non-negotiable imposition offending against our modern notions that moral principles must presuppose freedom of choice.³⁷ Simply because FPPR is a moral command, this does not mean that we cannot, *de facto*, either deny its moral bindingness upon us or subsequently restrict our participation in the good of practical reason by thwarting the fullness of our subsequent participation in that good. There is no good reason, therefore, to reject the moral status of the FPPR in Aquinas's moral system.

Drawing my discussion of Finnis's interpretation of Aquinas to a close, as brief as it is, I would like to mention one final textual difficulty that emerges with

Finnis's non-naturalist interpretation of Aquinas. It concerns Aquinas's discussion, in various passages of the *Summa theologiae*, of the "*vitia contra naturam*." Aquinas, for example, states the following while discussing masturbation, sodomy, and so on in *ST* II-II q. 154, a. 11:

[W]herever there occurs a special kind of deformity whereby the venereal act is rendered unbecoming, there is a determinate species of lust. This may occur in two ways: First, through being contrary to right reason, and this is common to all lustful vices; *secondly, because, in addition, it is contrary to the natural order of the venereal act as becoming to the human race; and this is called "the unnatural vice."*³⁸

How can any plausible interpretation of this text be reconciled with a non-naturalistic interpretation of Aquinas? Finnis merely dismisses instances of such texts, trotted out to support a "perverted faculty argument," as being ridiculous.³⁹ Yet as Patrick Lee, a Finnisian, admits in an article of his, "His [Aquinas's] argument ... seems naturalist. He seems here to hold that one's actions must not only conform to the order of reason, but also conform to the order set by nature."⁴⁰ Lee's response to the problem of reconciliation, while an improvement over Finnis, is also unsatisfactory because his response essentially amounts to discounting the significance of these passages as a series of careless and unreflective slides into naturalism, slides that "... do not cohere with what he says explicitly, and with care, about the first principles of morality and the general principles of the virtues."⁴¹

On the contrary, *pace* Lee, I would strongly argue that when Aquinas states that there are sins against nature he is being quite explicit and consistent with his underlying functional understanding of the *inclinationes naturales*. He is, in short, merely displaying his credentials as both a committed and a consistent naturalist. The structure of Aquinas's argument is overtly functionalist, presupposing a knowledge of the ordering of the sexual organs towards their natural given ends. The same kind of functionalist argument (albeit occurring in less sensational contexts) is used time and again elsewhere in *ST* (for example, a human being has two eyes; a human being normally has two eyes; two eyes promote better sight than one eye; ergo it is good for a human being to have two eyes). If voluntary actions involving the genitals accord with natural teleology they are judged fitting and virtuous, if not, they are judged unfitting and vicious. Grasp the natural ordering of a given function and actions that intentionally promote its natural ordering are good and actions that intentionally thwart its natural ordering are bad.

Aquinas's naturalism cannot be dismissed here as a set of distractions from his otherwise reflective commitment to non-naturalism, any more than his repeated invocations of Ulpian's "natural law is what nature has taught all animals" can, because these texts simply express, again, more crudely, Aquinas's already firmly established commitment to Aristotelian ethical naturalism.

Contra Finnis, there is therefore good reason to think that Aquinas did not support a meta-ethical position that was essentially non-naturalistic. Again, I think, it seems as if a Finnisian interpretation of Aquinas is not so much about discovering

the historical Aquinas as it is about reconstructing Aquinas's thought in the image and likeness of, well, an Analytical Thomist of the non-naturalistic variety.

5. Finnis's and Non-Naturalism

As we have seen, Finnis, due to his acceptance of the fact/value distinction, has rejected the tenability of ethical naturalism as a viable meta-ethical option. Normative statements cannot be derived or inferred from non-normative statements. The sources of normativity cannot be reduced to natural kinds or reduced to the natural properties of natural kinds. Given the significance Finnis attaches to rejecting naturalism and supporting his fundamental option for non-naturalism, there is, I think, a comparative lack of developed argumentative discourse in the Finnisian corpus that (a) defends non-naturalism against the claims that it is itself unsustainable because it is based on a dodgy metaphysics, rendering it decidedly queer to right minded meta-ethicists, and (b) spells out more fully the weaknesses inherent in Thomistic accounts of naturalism. The reiteration of the fact/value distinction, as a trump card, will not alas suffice. Both these areas of discourse, I think, need to be more fully developed if Finnis and his followers are to further advance their fundamental option for a non-naturalistic meta-ethical foundationalism, especially when confronted with a tradition of natural law inquiry that, due to the influence of Aristotle and Aquinas, has been heavily committed to ethical naturalism.

Before turning to the task of examining criticisms of non-naturalism and sketching out a defense, an important caveat on scope is needed. I cannot begin to tackle both the abovementioned areas of discourse in this chapter. I can hardly begin to do any justice to (a) let alone examine (b). Consequently I will only attempt to address a couple of key arguments that help defend the case of non-naturalism. Insofar as these arguments also serve to question the viability of Aristotelian-Thomistic naturalism, case (b) will also be touched upon. (If I had the space to elaborate on my problems with Aristotelian-Thomistic naturalism, I would focus on the tenability of the claim that we can determine a unique and characteristic "function for man" – an *ergon* – that is (i) naturalistically derived, (ii) sufficiently determinate, (iii) normatively prescriptive, and yet (iv) is not deeply question-begging.)⁴²

Turning now to the task of defending non-naturalism, a misplaced criticism directed against Finnis's non-naturalism can quickly be set aside, for it amounts to arguing that since non-naturalism is currently an unfashionable trend in philosophical circles, Finnis should (on pain of being unfashionable?) change his basic meta-ethical allegiance. Finnis should be swimming with the current not against it.⁴³ Truth, however, is not contingent on trends. If that were not so, then, by the same token, neo-Thomists ought to have abandoned, in the face of many fashionable consequentialist waves, their own defense of material moral absolutes. Finnis, therefore, need not be too concerned with the stigma of being labeled some sort of "meta-ethical fashion victim."

Another line of criticism has more substance to it but is itself ultimately based on a mistaken impression of what a defense of the fact/value distinction must amount to in terms of the relationship between facts and values. A wall of separation is said to be built up between the two such that facts and values do not meaningfully relate to one another, ergo the fallacious nature of the naturalistic fallacy.⁴⁴ Norms, however, are related to facts but not by way of attempting to derive the former from the latter. First, facts furnish us with the data of possibility (or impossibility). As Kant said “ought implies can.” With life we have the possibility of experiencing; with sight we have the possibility of viewing many different visual sensations, and so on. Without natural facts we cannot pursue health, knowledge, play, beauty, and so on. No supporter of the naturalistic fallacy, therefore, need be committed to the untenable position that facts are ethically irrelevant. If facts create the wings of possibility, they also burn away the wings of possibility. Because I am not a “little god” I do not have super-human powers. Because I cannot be in two places at the same time, I cannot simultaneously teach in class and study in the library, and so on.

Facts are also indispensable for fleshing out the demands of correctly established normative premises, for example, normative premises derived from prior normative premises (ultimately traceable back to underived normative starting points). Given that there is a normative duty not to intentionally kill another human being, it is a crucially relevant fact that X is a human being and not a rat or a pigeon. Given that there is a normative obligation to help rescue a drowning person, I am (unless there is an acceptable excuse) bound to render assistance. Here it is relevant to know (1) whether I knew that another person was drowning, and (2), that I had the physical capacity to be able to render assistance. The supporter of the naturalistic fallacy, therefore, need not be committed to the maintenance of an untenable wall of separation between facts and norms, for facts implicate norms and norms implicate facts in many vital ways.

Moving on, the criticism of Finnis’s meta-ethics made by Jean Porter packs more of a punch and is illustrative of a set of ontological concerns with his project that do need to be more fully addressed.⁴⁵ She criticizes Finnis’s explanation of the status of the basic human goods. She argues that Finnis’s talk of basic human goods is really talk about mysterious metaphysical entities. She asserts that Finnis is unclear as to what the ontological or logical status of the basic human goods is. Just what is the relationship of these entities to the world of natural objects and properties? For Porter, Finnis speaks of basic human goods as if they were Platonic forms enjoying an independent existence of their own. She concludes that Finnis is guilty of a “hypostatization” of the basic human goods.

Two Finnisian followers, Gerard Bradley and Robert George, have sought to clarify Finnis’s views on the status of the basic human goods. They reply that the basic human goods are simply underived goods, they are irreducible, they are intrinsic not extrinsic to human beings, and they are all self-evident truths grasped by the operation of practical reason.⁴⁶ I am afraid, however, this reply does not really advance discussion very far because there is *no deep* explanation provided as to what the underlying *ontological status* of these goods actually is. Bradley and George respond to the charge of “hypostatization” in the following terms:

[It is necessary to] insist on the distinction [between speculative and practical reason] because without it morality would be reduced to nature and such reductionism is bad metaphysics which blocks understanding of morality They [Finnis *et al.*] then defend the irreducibility of morality to nature by pointing to the logical irreducibility of moral ought to theoretical is.⁴⁷

Now I agree with Finnis's autonomy of ethics thesis that denies the reducibility of the ethical to the non-ethical and I also agree with Finnis's claim concerning the logical distinctiveness of what "ought to be" from "that which is" (being a meta-ethical sympathizer, I am so disposed), but all this, without further detailed explication and analysis of the ontological status of the basic human goods, merely serves to sidestep the central thrust of Porter's critique, not answer it. Critics (meta-ethical opponents), will, in short, be underwhelmed by such a response. Even if, for the purpose of argument, we were to agree that X exerts a direct unmediated normative pull and that this normative pull seems to be uniquely apprehended by our practical intellect, Porter would be entitled to assert, "you haven't really answered my question. What are the ontological entailments of such moral phenomena? What exactly is the metaphysical status of this X such that is said to generate a normative click of recognition in the practical intellect?"

Although Porter's critique is specifically directed at Finnis, she is engaged in a line of criticism (in her case to support a naturalistic anthropology) that typifies a broader charge laid at the door of non-naturalism – namely, that non-naturalism, once smoked out of the closet, is metaphysically queer and cannot therefore be taken seriously as a basic meta-ethical stance. The critique advanced by Porter is actually rather similar to the thrust of criticism traditionally directed against the non-naturalism of G. E. Moore. This is hardly surprising, once we reflect on it, since Finnis and Moore, protests to the contrary notwithstanding, actually share a number of similarities in terms of their basic meta-ethical underpinnings (non-naturalism; defense of intrinsic goods; intuitionism; non-reductionism, and so on).⁴⁸ J. L. Mackie's famous charge against Moorean non-naturalism still rings loud today, a charge that is broad enough in scope to cover all forms of non-naturalism. For Mackie, non-naturalism can charitably be described as the product of a fevered philosophical imagination, an imagination that, having rejected naturalism, proceeds to posit the *ad hoc* existence of a mysterious realm of being in order to maintain an aura of objectivity when claiming to make moral judgments.⁴⁹

6. Attributive v. Predicative Good

Peter Geach is one of the foremost Analytical Thomists (of the naturalistic variety) who has sought to reject both the viability of non-naturalism and to defend the credibility of Aristotelian-Thomistic functionalism. Geach is particularly dismissive of the very idea that goodness can be understood in the Moorean terms as a simple, indefinable, non-natural property. Although I cannot pretend to give Geach's work on the logical status of "good" the attention here it deserves, I hope

nevertheless to say enough concerning his *Good and Evil* to outline the kind of critical approach that, I think, a Finnisian would need to take in order to counter the charge that “good” can only be used attributively and not predicatively.⁵⁰

Geach starts by getting us to address the question, what, if anything, did “good” mean if not the natural properties of a “good X”? Geach is perplexed by non-naturalism’s denial that one could not appeal to the natural features or properties of a thing in order to account for our ethical assessment of it. In short, Geach thinks it bad philosophy to speak of “good” as a non-natural property. As Geach states, “nobody has ever given a coherent and understandable account of what it is for an attribute to be non-natural.”⁵¹

The first line of attack Geach uses is to expose the logical-grammatical errors he perceives being perpetrated by defenders of non-naturalism. The second line of response is to show how the logical status of propositions about the “good,” correctly understood, are conducive to supporting an Aristotelian-Thomistic functionalism. In order to advance the first claim, he draws attention to what he identifies as a key difference between the use of good as a “predicative adjective” and the use of good as an “attributive adjective.” An adjective is predicative in Geach’s usage if it fits the following criterion, If X is AB, then X is A and X is B. Thus take the statement “Cedric is a red parrot.” Since Cedric is a red parrot, Cedric is red and Cedric is a parrot. Further, if Cedric is a red parrot and all parrots are birds then Cedric is a red bird. For Geach, however, it is not the case that we can talk of good in such predicative ways. Thus “Cedric is a good parrot,” cannot be rendered Cedric is good and Cedric is a parrot, for we are concerned with Cedric as a “good what?”

If the predicative use of good were indeed *verboten*, a Finnisian (not just a Moorean) would find it exceedingly difficult to reject the naturalistic claim that “X is good” is equivalent to “X is a good AB” where AB just are the natural properties of things we apparently evaluate all the time in everyday life. There can be no good *simpliciter*. There is no ontological space left for such an understanding of goodness, for, as Geach states, “There is no such thing as being just good or bad, there is only being a good or bad *so-and-so*.”⁵²

In order to respond to Geach’s argument (and begin to address the aura of suspicion hanging over the status of a basic human good), a Finnisian must, I think, tackle head on Geach’s claim that good cannot have appropriate predicative as well as attributive uses. While I think Geach’s challenge can be overcome, the following brief remarks must, alas, suffice as indicative of the kind of line that I think a plausible counter-response to Geach’s dismissal ought to take.

Consider the characteristics of a napalm bomb. Geach wants to say that we cannot claim that X is simply bad or simply good only whether X is good or bad in virtue of so and so. But what exactly is illicit in asserting both that X (a napalm bomb) can be a good or bad so and so (napalm bomb) but still ask whether X (a napalm bomb) *really is* good or bad, without further referencing any further standard of appraisal beyond a direct appeal to goodness or badness?⁵³ Such an example is not unintelligible, I suggest, *pace* Geach because it is both linguistically ordinary and logically valid (in some cases *at least*) to say that something X simply is good or bad.

The term good and its correlates in other languages fulfill a variety of different linguistic roles. Not all roles are valid. Geach is right to point to many inconsistencies in our use of good-talk that crop up, inconsistencies that are all too ready to snare and befuddle the unsuspecting. Geach, however, is trying to keep out *all* uses of the predicative good, because *some uses* are clearly not justified. Yet the reason why Geach cannot expurgate all uses of the predicative good, in my view, is that ordinary people (not just odd philosophers) in their modes of speaking, unlike Geach, are not set in opposition to the very idea of the existence of non-natural moral properties. They are, so to speak, more “metaphysically open.” Because they do not find the very idea of non-natural moral properties beyond the pale, they are, in consequence, more receptive to the ontological position that goodness really is a unique and distinct kind of property.

Ordinary people are not necessarily being sloppy or inconsistent when they use good as a predicate, that sometimes, in addition to attributive usage, the directly apprehended predicative good of at least some things or objects (like Finnis’s basic human goods) can make the very pursuit of them intelligible – *not* because we pursue X in order to achieve Y – but simply because X really is apprehended as an end worthy of pursuit entirely for its own sake. Ordinary people, with reflective justification, can state that, far from being muddled or confused, careful predicative usage cannot be banished because Geach and others are ill-disposed towards the very idea of non-natural moral properties, for that idea alone just might (and, I think, really does) account for a very important feature that would otherwise be left out of our moral landscape.

7. Redundancy of Appeals to Non-Natural Properties

If the predicative good cannot be ruled out of bounds then the case for non-naturalism cannot be dismissed by naturalists on the ground that it necessarily rests on a conceptual mistake about our usage of the word “good.” Another attempt to challenge non-naturalism is to reject its basic idea that non-natural properties are needed in order to preserve the distinctiveness of ethical claims either because (a) “X is good” means that “X is equivalent to natural property Y” or it means (b) that “goodness and Y just are one and the same natural property.” Because moral properties are held to be equivalent to or the same as natural properties, the creation of additional metaphysical entities to explain the distinctiveness of our ethical language is held to be unnecessary and yet another symptom of adherence to a dodgy *ad hoc* metaphysics.

When reflecting on claims about metaphysical entities I am here reminded of Paul Grice’s words of caution aimed at those who would, with undue eagerness, consign odd metaphysical entities to the dustbin of ideas:

I am not greatly enamoured of ... a concern to exclude such “queer” or “mysterious” entities as souls, purely mental events, purely mental properties and so forth. My taste is for keeping open house for all sorts of conditions or entities, just so long as when they

come in they help with the housework. Provided that I see them [do explanatory] work ... I do not find them queer or mysterious at all. ... To exclude honest working entities seems to me like metaphysical snobbery ...⁵⁴

Perhaps, it will be retorted, non-natural properties do not help with the housework for they are not honest hard-working entities. They simply add unnecessary complication and clutter to any well run metaphysical household. Here I want to present the outline of an argument for “keeping the help” of non-natural properties that builds on insights first presented by G. E. Moore. Such a line of argument can, I think, be a good supportive strategy to deploy in defense of Finnis’s claim that the basic human goods are irreducible and cannot be accounted for in purely naturalistic terms.

In *Principia Ethica*, Moore launches the following salvo that he thought would expose a central weakness in all naturalistic accounts of the good:

Whatever definition is offered, it may always be asked, with significance, of the complex so defined, whether it is itself good It may indeed be that what we desire to desire is always good; perhaps even the converse may be true: but it is very doubtful that this is the case, and the mere fact that we understand what is meant by doubting it, shows clearly that we have two different notions before our minds.⁵⁵

Today Moore’s Open Question Argument (OQA), if it is invoked, is often done so with a view to poking fun at its grand pretensions. Moore’s argument, it is claimed, is inherently question-begging. This line of criticism is advanced by William Frankena.⁵⁶ He asks, is something we acknowledge to have natural property Y, and is held good, always an open question? For Frankena the answer would be yes only if the definition provided was thought to be a bad one. A question is closed if it provides a good definition. But, crucially, for the naturalists, they do not regard their definition as being bad. Thus OQA is seen to be question-begging because it asserts a premise that the naturalists will simply deny, namely, that a naturalistic definition of X cannot be a good definition of X.

I would not disagree that Frankena’s argument, as presented, is justified. Moore himself, is notoriously vague on precisely what the frame of reference ought to be for assessing claims of “openness.” Moore therefore lays himself open to the charge that he is fallaciously accusing the naturalist of being caught in a strict logical bind, that on pain of contradiction he or she must accept the non-equivalence of good with any natural property. Frankena therefore usefully exposes the myth of that interpretation. There is, however, an interpretation of Moore’s basic insight that, if not Moore’s actual position, is, I think, inherently more plausible and presents a much greater difficulty for the naturalist to contend with.

The way to understand Moore’s basic insight relates to an earlier point I made about the use of ordinary language while discussing Geach’s assessment of predicative uses of the word “good.” As Stephen Ball points out, the legacy of Moore’s contribution may be that it is not so much about the openness of a question understood in purely logical terms, as it is about the openness (irreducibility) of the

meaning of “good” to the understanding of ordinary people and how they use “good” (and its cognates) in their conceptual thinking about moral questions.⁵⁷

Ordinary people can make sense of the possibility that analytical moral claims concerning the equivalence of “good” and natural property Y do not capture their ethical meaning and are therefore “open” in a way that differentiates them from the non-openness of other analytical questions, for example, if a man is a bachelor must he be unmarried? So understood, I think Moore’s OQA, as modified, furnishes the non-naturalist with a direct referential framework that does not beg the question concerning the establishment of criteria used for assessing the *plausible openness* of a definition. I think it powerful enough to say that any form of naturalism (a) that seeks to define “X is good” as meaning that “X is equivalent to natural property Y” is going to face a well grounded objection. Henry Veatch’s ontological naturalism, for example, does, I think, fall squarely under this type (a) category, for Veatch reductively seeks to define the good in terms of an analysis of natural trajectories held to be perfective of human nature. So too does Benedict Ashley’s brand of naturalism fall under this type (a) category, for he equivalences the “good” of the *lex naturalis* with an anthropological account of “basic human needs.”

Some naturalists, for example, Anthony Lisska, contend that OQA, if it is effective against type (a) naturalism, cannot be invoked to challenge type (b) naturalism which states that “goodness and Y just are one and the same natural property.” Since good is not being defined in terms of the possession of natural properties, the charge of justifying reductionism by unwarranted definition does not apply. Lisska develops an interpretation of human “essence” as a set of dispositional properties, properties that are dynamically ordered towards the final cause of human flourishing.⁵⁸ Goodness is not defined in terms of Y for goodness and Y are indeed one and the same. Recent work in non-analytic type-identity relations is said to challenge the traditional analytic/synthetic divide. It is possible to understand propositions about the identity of natural properties like “water = H₂O” as being necessarily true without them being analytic. Given this theory of type-identity relations, it makes no sense, given current knowledge, to say that – “I know X is H₂O but is it water?” or “I know X is water but is it H₂O?” This is a closed question not an open one. Similarly, as for water = H₂O, the property that we call “good” really will turn out to be type-identical with a naturally occurring property.⁵⁹

Perhaps then, the reach of OQA has finally been outflanked. Naturalism is non-reductionistic because there is no erroneous attempt made to reduce X to Y in the first place. X simply is Y and vice versa. There is nothing to reduce. The problem evaporates.

Is this the death nail for non-naturalism? I don’t think so. The problem with this kind of approach is that like is not really being compared with like, for “good” is actually a very different kind of concept from “water.” “Good” is a normative concept (unlike water) and is not at all the kind of concept that can be shown to identify the same sort of property as a natural concept.

Terence Horgan and Mark Timmons, I think, develop a penetrating critique of the ability of type-identity relations to get around the applicability of OQA to type

(b) naturalism.⁶⁰ Horgan and Timmons ask us to imagine different pairs of twin earth scenarios, a device first used by Hilary Putnam to advance the case for semantic moral naturalism. Earth A (EA) is tied to the proposition that water and H₂O are one and the same. On Earth B (EB) they call A₄Z water. It has all the appearance of what people on EA call water but it is not H₂O. They both use the same word to co-reference different natural properties. It is just a linguistic coincidence that EA uses water to co-reference H₂O and EB uses water to co-reference A₄Z. Imagine now a second pairing. Moral Earth A (MEA) and Moral Earth B (MEB). On MEA they co-reference good and “act such that you pursue the greatest pleasure for the greatest number.” On MEB they co-reference good and “act such that you pursue the inbuilt tendencies of your nature.”

Is the case between the two sets of pairs really similar? No. Horgan and Timmons are right to argue that they are not. Comparing EA and EB we can say that there need be no disagreement about the different natural properties being referred to. EA people simply use water for X and EB people simply use water for Y. There is no underlying disagreement about natural properties. When EA people say “water” EB people know they are not talking about A₄Z and when EB people say “water” EA people know they are not talking about H₂O. Here there is no fundamental disagreement in conceptual understanding between EA and EB. Crucially, when EA people say that water is H₂O it may be confusing to EB people and vice versa but it *is not thought wrong*. The situation is *not the same* however when we compare the two ethical planets. In that case there is a shared understanding of what goodness is, namely, what we ought to do, but basic disagreement over the very standard of what it is that we ought to do. Disagreement is a key feature because it makes sense for us to see how it occurs here in a way that makes no sense to us when we think of the water example. If type (b) naturalism were valid then we would not expect disagreement, only confusion. Yet MEA people think that MEB people really are wrong in their “one and the same” claim and vice versa. By ignoring the distinctiveness of good-talk we would fail to see and understand the reality of moral disagreement here. The problem arises because the distinctiveness of goodness as normative cannot be explained away by claiming that it is a natural property identical with another natural property. Goodness cannot be boiled down to an analogous kind of type-identity relationship found in the water/H₂O example.

Here, OQA, at the hands of Horgan and Timmons, once again springs back into life. Ordinary MEA people will say to ordinary MEB people, “you say that X is good, but is it good?” and vice versa. The argument, of the open and distinctive nature of claims about the good, once again confronts type (b) naturalists who think that their approach to naturalism (unlike type (a) naturalism) successfully outflanks OQA. When Lisska, for example, makes use of type-identity relations to address the punch of OQA, I think he only really succeeds in buying naturalism a temporary reprieve, nothing more. How do we know that the end being realized by dispositional property Y is in itself good? or Y is dynamically ordered to the pursuit of end Z but is our pursuit of Z thus normative? These remain full-blown open questions, the product of a powerful argument that continues to haunt the precincts

of naturalism. Simply because a dispositional property is said to be dynamic and not static, and good is treated as being identical with these dynamic trajectories, *pace* Lisska, does not ultimately make it any less problematic as a naturalistic claim. As with (a) type naturalism, (b) type naturalism also fails to escape the clutches of the OQA.

8. Concluding Remarks

In the first part of this chapter I have argued against Finnis's claim that Aquinas was, like himself, a meta-ethical non-naturalist. I found his case wanting in the interpretation stakes and concluded that the neo-Thomists have the upper hand as far as interpretation goes. However, I also argued that this "victory" for the neo-Thomists is short lived because the case for naturalism is not itself ultimately sustainable. This imperils the future of natural law ethics to the extent that natural law ethics is assumed to be naturalistic through and through. Fortunately for Finnis, I found his own position, while influenced by Aquinas, quite distinct. I then moved on to argue that the distinctiveness of Finnis's own project opens up an alternative path by which to defend a credible foundation for natural law ethics – meta-ethical non-naturalism.

In the second part of the chapter, I sought to advance some defensive lines of argument that, while not actually made by Finnis, are, in my view, needed in order to tackle credibility problems with his allegiance to non-naturalism, especially, (1) a defense of the notion of predicate goodness; and (2) a defense of the reality of non-natural moral properties via a deployment of a modified form of Moore's Open Question Argument. The use of these strategies, in my view, significantly advances the case for the credibility of non-naturalism as a fundamental meta-ethical alternative for the underpinning of a natural law based ethics.

Notes

- 1 Finnis's major monographs are his *Natural Law and Natural Rights (NLNR)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); *Fundamentals of Ethics (FoE)* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1983); *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- 2 I am especially thinking here of the commitment of G. E. Moore to ethical intuitionism. Ethical intuitionism proposes that we have a capacity for intuition and that there are properties that we grasp via this capacity that cannot be reduced, deduced or inferred to other kinds of non-moral properties. John Haldane has alluded to some of these analytical influences on Finnis *et al.* in his "Thomistic Ethics in America," *Logos* 3:4 (2003), 151–68.
- 3 As Haldane states in his article entitled "Analytical Thomism: A Brief Introduction," "Analytical Thomism is not concerned to appropriate St. Thomas for the advancement of any particular set of doctrines. Equally, it is not a movement of pious exegesis. Instead, it seeks to deploy the methods and ideas of twentieth-century philosophy – of

- the sort dominant within the English-speaking world – in connection with the broad framework of ideas introduced and developed by Aquinas.” *Monist* 80:4 (1997), 485–86. See also his “Analytical Philosophy and the Future of Thomism,” *Cogito* 13:1 (1999), 45–48.
- 4 On the use of public reason see *Natural Law and Public Reason*, Robert P. George and Christopher Wolfe, eds. (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000).
 - 5 Heinrich Rommen, *The Natural Law* (St. Louis, Mo.: Herder, 1947); Henry Veatch, *For an Ontology of Morals* (Ivanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1971); Henry Veatch, *Rational Man: A Modern Interpretation of Aristotelian Ethics* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1962); *Swimming Against the Current in Contemporary Philosophy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990); Ralph McInerny, *Ethica Thomistica*, Rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997); *Aquinas on Human Action* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992); Russell Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); Benedict M. Ashley, *Living the Truth in Love* (New York, NY: Alba House, 1996); Anthony J. Lisska, *Aquinas’s Theory of Natural Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
 - 6 See, for example, John Finnis, “Natural Law and the ‘Is–Ought’ Question: An Invitation to Professor Veatch,” *Catholic Lawyer* 26 (1981), 266–77; *FoE*, 10–23; John Finnis and Germain Grisez, “The Basic Principles of Natural Law: A Reply to Ralph McInerny,” in *Readings in Moral Theology no. 7*, Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, eds. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991), 157–70.
 - 7 *STI–II*, q. 94, a. 2; see Finnis, “Natural Law and the Is–Ought,” 266–73.
 - 8 Anthony Lisska, for example, in his *Aquinas’s Theory of Natural Law*, invokes the authority of two well-known Thomists in support of his own brand of naturalistic essentialism: “In his *The Tradition of Natural Law*, Yves Simon suggested that a theory of universals, or essences, is a necessary condition for an elucidation of the concept of natural law In *Man and the State*, Maritain argues explicitly for the concept of essence as a necessary condition for understanding Aquinas on natural law. He writes: ‘What I am emphasizing is the first basic element to be recognized in natural law, namely the *ontological* element; I mean the *normality of functioning* which is grounded in the essence of that being: man ...’ See also Ralph McInerny, “The Principles of Natural Law,” *Readings in Moral Theology no. 7*, Curran and McCormick, eds., 139–56.
 - 9 Finnis, *NLNR*, 33–42.
 - 10 *III*, 1, i.
 - 11 Finnis, *NLNR*, 36–42.
 - 12 O’Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 23–24.
 - 13 Finnis, *NLNR*, 33–36.
 - 14 Finnis, *NLNR*, 33–36.
 - 15 Finnis, *Aquinas*, 90 (my emphasis).
 - 16 A. N. Prior, *Logic and the Basics of Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949).
 - 17 Finnis, *NLNR*, 30–32, 81–97; *FoE*, 1–23.
 - 18 Germain Grisez, Joseph Boyle and John Finnis, “Practical Principles, Moral Truths, and Ultimate Ends,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987), 99–151.
 - 19 Finnis, *Aquinas*, 91.
 - 20 Finnis, *NLNR*, 35.
 - 21 Finnis, *Aquinas*, 86–94.
 - 22 This interpretative approach was first proposed by Germain Grisez in the 1960s. See his “The First Principle of Practical Reason” in *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*,

- Anthony Kenny, ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 340–82.
- 23 Finnis, *NLNR*, 36.
- 24 Grisez, Boyle and Finnis, “Practical Principles,” 126–28.
- 25 Finnis, *Aquinas*, 103–29.
- 26 Finnis, *Aquinas*, 103–29; Grisez, Boyle and Finnis, “Practical Principles,” 119–29.
- 27 Finnis, *NLNR*, 17–19, 36; *FoE*, 10–17; *Aquinas*, 83–102.
- 28 *ST I* q. 79, a. 11.
- 29 Finnis, *FoE*, 10–17.
- 30 Finnis, *Aquinas*, 89.
- 31 *Summa Theologica*, Fathers of the English Dominican Province, trans. (New York, NY: Benziger Bros., 1947) (my emphasis).
- 32 (My emphasis.)
- 33 Finnis, *Aquinas*, 90–92; *FoE*, 10–17.
- 34 John Haldane, “A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind,” in *Form and Matter: Themes in Contemporary Metaphysics*, David S. Oderberg, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 54.
- 35 (My emphasis.)
- 36 Simon Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1988), 256.
- 37 See Benedict Ashley “What is the End of the Person? The Vision of God and Integral Human Fulfillment,” in *Moral Truth and Moral Tradition*, Luke Gormally, ed. (Dublin: Four Courts, 1994), 68–96.
- 38 (My emphasis.)
- 39 *NLNR*, 48.
- 40 Patrick Lee “Is Thomas’s Natural Law Theory Naturalist?” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1998), 567–87, 586.
- 41 Lee, “Thomas’s,” 586.
- 42 This line of critique, of course, is not new and is directly influenced by my reading of Bernard Williams, among others. While I do not share Williams’s views on several major meta-ethical topics, here I think he is right in the central thrust of his analysis. See his *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 62–76. Williams presents us with an interesting case of accepting Peter Geach’s conclusions with regard to predicative and attributive goodness (*Morality*, 52–61, see the discussion of this topic later in the chapter) and yet he rejects the possibility of Geach’s attempt to determine an *ergon* for man as a way of grounding the moral enterprise. Even if the case against predicative goodness were conceded, therefore, it need not entail the success of Geach’s second leg. See further Williams’s *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 30–53.
- 43 Such a criticism “of being unfashionable” is not uncommonly mentioned by some “Thomheads” (an affectionate colloquialism) whenever the work of Finnis (and collaborators) is being discussed, especially during conference discussions or in informal talks.
- 44 See, for example, Vernon J. Bourke, “Review of John Finnis’ ‘Natural Law and Natural Rights’,” *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 24 (1981), 243–47; McInerny, *Ethica Thomistica*, 12–34.
- 45 Jean Porter, “Basic Goods and the Human Good,” *Thomist* 47 (1993), 27–49. See also Hittinger, *Critique of the New Natural Law Theory*, 187.

- 46 Gerard V. Bradley and Robert P. George, "The New Natural Law Theory: A Reply to Jean Porter," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 39 (1994), 303–15.
- 47 Bradley and George, "New Natural Law Theory," 310.
- 48 I am well aware that there are crucial differences in their respective ethical systems, especially about what should be classified as an intrinsic good, and how, if at all, goods can be said to be commensurable with one another. My point is simply that in stressing differences we all too readily deflect attention from the identification of fruitful ideational similarities, similarities that, I think, ought not to be neglected if we are to deepen our meta-ethical understanding of the case for a well grounded non-naturalistic natural law ethics.
- 49 J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), 95: "If there were objective values ... then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe." Mackie, contra Porter (and Geach below), is not concerned to defend naturalism. Mackie's basic claim is that the non-naturalist is right about the semantics (moral predicates do purport to refer to non-natural properties) for what it is worth, but quite wrong to suppose that moral predicates actually refer to anything.
- 50 Peter T. Geach, "Good and Evil," *Analysis* 17 (1956), 33–42, reprinted in *Theories of Ethics*, Philippa Foot, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 64–73.
- 51 Geach, "Good and Evil," 66.
- 52 Geach, "Good and Evil," 65 (my emphasis).
- 53 An example cannibalized from a more complex example discussed by Charles Pidgen in his excellent article "Geach on 'Good'," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 40 (1990), 129–54, 131–32.
- 54 Paul Grice, "Method in Philosophical Psychology (From the Banal to the Bizarre)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association* 48 (1975), 23–53, 30–31.
- 55 G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), 57.
- 56 William K. Frankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy," *Mind* 48 (1939), 464–77, reprinted in *Theories of Ethics*, Foot, ed., 50–63.
- 57 Stephen W. Ball, "Reductionism in Ethics and Science: A Contemporary Look at G. E. Moore's Open Question Argument," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1988), 197–213.
- 58 Lisska, *Aquinas's Theory*, 195–201.
- 59 Hilary Putnam was the first to propose such a strategy. See his "The Meaning of 'Meaning'", in Putnam, *Mind, Language, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 244. Other philosophers who have been working on developing a relationship between the semantic functions of moral terms and the functions of natural-kind terms are David Brink, Richard Boyd and Peter Railton. In their differing ways they each defend a semantic account of naturalistic moral realism.
- 60 What I present here is both a modified and a simplified account of their more complex argument (further evidence of my "cannibalistic tendencies"). See Terence Horgan and Mark Timmons, "Troubles for New Wave Moral Semantics: The Open Question Argument Revived," *Philosophical Papers* 21 (1992), 153–75; "New Wave Moral Realism Meets Moral Twin Earth," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 16 (1990–91), 447–65.

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Chapter Ten

Wittgenstein as a Gateway to Analytical Thomism

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1. Introduction

The issues of the real existence of the objects of knowledge and their alleged intentional existence in knowledge may hardly seem as crucial in Wittgenstein's thought as they are in Aquinas and his tradition. Perhaps that is why analytic philosophy has mainly overlooked aspects of Wittgenstein that are important for helping to solve some of analytic philosophy's long standing problems. Thomists are in a position to recognize those dimensions of Wittgenstein and, therefore, use them to illuminate those problems.

Questions concerning the real existence of objects of knowledge arise at two levels, the level of "intellectual knowledge," the knowledge expressed in language, and the level of sense perception. By "knowledge" I mean awareness in general, not just warranted certitude of truth. "Really existing" is meant in opposition to an object's merely being imagined or conceived.

Wittgenstein's private language argument is intimately connected to the issue of real existence as an object of intellectual knowledge, although that connection has never before been pointed out, as far as I am aware. In fact, a very common version of Wittgenstein's private language argument supports Aquinas's view of being, that which exists, as the primary object of conception. And it supports that view in a way that corrects, in favor of Aquinas, a basic misunderstanding in analytic philosophy about the existential quantifier.

The question of the intentional existence of objects may seem even further removed from Wittgenstein. Yet he and Aquinas agree completely that interior mental relations to objects could accomplish what their proponents want only if those relations were literally existences for their objects.¹ In fact Wittgenstein may be the only philosopher since Aristotle to arrive at that radical idea, independently of interpreting Aristotle, to hold it. (Phenomenology got the idea from Brentano, but Brentano got it from the Thomists.) Wittgenstein even provides a strong, though overlooked, defense of that idea. But where he defended it as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the ability of mental states to explain linguistic behavior, Thomists argue that its absurdity is only apparent.

I will use Wittgenstein to defend the Thomistic idea of intentional existence. Then I will show that Thomism can explain how sense perception makes real

existence an intentional object in a way that solves the analysts' problem of perception. The examination of real existence as an intentional object will then show how to avoid analysts' problems concerning reference to the nonexistent.

2. Real Existents as What are First Known

Aquinas holds that "that which the intellect first conceives, as the most knowable object, and that in which it resolves all conceptions is being" (that which exists).² This proclamation of intellectual rather than perceptual realism may seem far from Wittgenstein's problematic and that of analytic philosophy in general. In fact, the thesis that what the intellect first conceives is being, follows from Wittgenstein's argument against private language and does so in a way that leads to a reevaluation of existential quantification.

Wittgenstein's private language argument has been variously interpreted, but we need not enter that dispute. What matters is that an argument commonly attributed to him is sound: a language that could not possibly be understood by anyone but the user would not be a language. If I now decide to use "water" for something knowable only by me, there can be no way for me to tell whether the next time I call something "water" I am using "water" in the same way. But a "language" for which there is no way of determining whether I am using the terms in different ways is not a language; it is at most a make-believe language. What is missing from it is the ability to distinguish correct from incorrect uses of words. To do that, I must have access to objects that allow me to check the relations of words to their uses independently of my present opinions concerning those relations. A person alone on an island could attach labels to things. Then she could write a diary using those labels and know she was using the words correctly by observing which labels were attached to which things. That would not be a private language in the required sense because someone else finding those attached labels and the diary, together with other possible public evidence, could reasonably conclude that those labels were linguistic and determine what their meanings were.

Whatever Wittgenstein's intentions, this argument is causal. Certain conditions are necessary for knowledge of the correct and incorrect uses of words, and private objects cannot supply those conditions. Wittgenstein's examples of private objects are often states of conscious subjects' awareness of themselves, for example, pain. But the argument applies equally to merely imagined objects, since the object I am imagining now is no more publicly accessible than is my state of pain. In fact, his argument applies with more force to imaginary objects than to pain, twinges, tickles and the like because the latter states often have specific public behavior associated with them, while imagining object X as opposed to object Y rarely, if ever, does. Hence the argument most basically shows that language comes into being to communicate about really existing things, where "really existing" is opposed to merely being imagined or conceived. The real existence of objects is a causal condition necessary for the existence of language, because it is necessary for knowing correct usage independently of subjective feelings about usage. So

language comes about *first* for the purpose of communicating about real existents. (Not that what is first said in language is necessarily the *truth* about real existents.) Introspectible states really exist also; so the real existence of objects is not a sufficient condition for language. The nature of the objects must be such that they are other than our mental states, so that, when they really exist, they can be publicly accessed. But objects of such a nature can be imagined, and when public objects are merely imagined, they are not publicly accessible. Therefore language requires really existent public objects. The private language argument shows that language first comes about for the sake of communicating about things that exist independently of our mental states.

To judge that a use of language is correct usage, we need awareness that the standards by which we measure correctness are what they are independently of our mental states, otherwise the correctness could be just an appearance caused by our mental states. But an imaginary object provides no control by which to measure correctness in the use of language; for the fact that an imaginary object is what it is is not independent of our mental states. So Wittgenstein's argument supports Aquinas's view that conceptual awareness, and hence linguistically expressible awareness, has as its first (and causally foundational) goal, communication about things that exist independently of our mental states.

Wittgenstein may have seen this point himself. In *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Wittgenstein discusses the kind of "surrounding" necessary for there to be games, rules and language. He asks whether a new rule, yet to be applied, could even be understood to be a rule, if no rule had ever actually been applied. Then he adds:

And if it is now said: "And isn't it enough for there to be an imaginary application?" the answer is: No. (Possibility of a private language.)³

He immediately connects the insufficiency of an imaginary application of a rule with the need for language to have public objects, thereby implying that if imaginary, not really existing, applications were sufficient for understanding rules, language would not need public objects. The real existence he may seem to be talking about is the existence of rule-governed behavior, including language, not the existence of objects to which the rules relate the behavior. But for an alleged application of a rule to avoid being tantamount to a private language, the real existence both of the rule-governed behavior and of objects to which the rule relates the behavior, is required. If we tried to use "water" correctly, and hence repeatedly, by performing the public acts of saying it or writing it down for merely imaginary objects, there would still be no such thing as knowing that we were following a rule correctly. No more could we know that we were now using "water" for the same imaginary object as in the past than we could know that we were using a word for a state of self-consciousness in the same way. Despite the nonimaginary character of the current act of writing "water," the imaginary character of the object for which we are using "water" deprives us of any way of determining that we are using "water" as we have in the past. Where there can be no way of knowing that a

putative rule has been applied correctly, there is no such thing as a rule that can be applied correctly. So, for the rule-governed behavior of language to exist, public acts of using words would not be enough, as long as the putative rules attempt to connect those acts with merely imaginary objects. A necessary condition for public behavior to amount to applying a rule for the use of “water” correctly is that the objects for which we use “water” also be public, as opposed to being merely imaginary, and so those objects must be real existents.

3. Evaluating Existential Quantification

What is more revealing than whether Wittgenstein saw the consequence that public language requires real existents is that either he did not see that consequence or was not concerned about it if he did. If the status of existence as an object of knowledge had been as central an issue for him as it was for Aquinas, he would hardly have overlooked that implication of his argument.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein suggests a reason for his lack of concern about the epistemological status of existence. He there implies that existence is a logical value:

The “experience” which we need to understand logic is not that such and such is the case, but that something *is*; but that is *no* experience (5.552).

In implying that existence is a logical value, Wittgenstein was agreeing with what many have said after the success (at least in many contexts) of symbolizing existential propositions by representing predicates as functions whose arguments are quantified variables ($\text{Ex}[\text{Fx} \ \& \ \text{Gx}]$). Many have interpreted that analysis to imply that the word “exists” is essentially logical; “exists” means that a concept has an application or a predicate has a referent.⁴ Russell, for example, explained the meaning of “exists” circularly as deriving from the meaning of “true.”⁵

For Aquinas, the lessons to be learned from the usefulness of quantificational notation would be almost the exact opposite. One cause of the usefulness of expressing predicates as functions of existentially quantified arguments is the truth, shown by the private language argument, of Aquinas’s thesis that the primary goal of language is to “objectify” real existents. Following Jacques Maritain’s usage (which derives from Aquinas⁶) and contrary to the common usage of analysts, I will hereafter use “object” in contrast to existing (actually or possibly) thing. “Object” means object of awareness. To be an object is to be a term of a cognitional relation like sensing, imagining, conceiving, naming, describing, and so on. To “objectify” is to make something a term of such a relation. Here we are concerned about linguistic objectification, making thing X the term of relations like naming X, using a pronoun for X, and describing X.

Knowledge of affirmative truth, for example, “Plato knew Aristotle,” requires the diverse objectification of that which is not diverse as an existent thing or things. We can know that “*Fa*” is true since we are aware to begin with of an actual or

possible thing made object by “a” and a thing made object by “F.” Knowing the “correspondence” of propositions with reality does not result from directly comparing the mind with things, and in particular, not from comparing propositions with states of affairs or facts, but from comparing different objects already known not just as objects but as actual or possible things. And since a thing that was not objectified diversely could not be compared to itself, when we are aware of the identity of diverse objects, we are at least implicitly aware of our mental acts of objectification including the mental construct called a “proposition” through which we compare diverse objects. So awareness of the identity of diverse objects as things results in awareness of the proposition’s, and so the mind’s, correspondence with things – truth.

For judgment to be the awareness of the identity of things which are diverse as objects, “it is necessary that every object set before the mind be set there as something able to exist outside the mind.”⁷ Because objects are diverse as objects, each object must be first of all known as identical with something that is not just an “object,” not just related to a knower in these ways, but with an (actual or possible) cognition-independent thing potentially objectified in more than one way. (So the “is” of predication is not the “is” of identity. The identity with things that causes truth must hold before diversely objectified things are compared in propositions.) In particular, what predicates first express, must be objectified as features of possible existents.

Every predicate not only signifies such or such an intelligible determination, but *that which has* that intelligible determination. Intellectual simple apprehension, in perceiving what I call “triangular” or “conic,” perceives *something* (possible) which is made its object under the formal aspect in question.⁸

Since language is public, the first objects expressed by predicates had the *logical* property of being so objectified as to be eligible to be attributed to existents before Frege invented a language that represented this property syntactically. Language cannot exist unless its first predicates serve the purpose of communicating about real existents, which requires that predicates have the logical property of being attributable to real existents in propositions. Unless predicates objectify, not only some intelligible determination, for example, what it is to be a philosopher or a musician, but also some possibly existing thing with such as determination, we could not know the identity of diverse objects as things. What it is to be a philosopher is not identifiable with what it is to be a musician; only a thing that is a philosopher can be identical with a thing that is a musician, or a thing with philosophical knowledge identical with a thing with musical skill.

What Aquinas means by reducing all conceptions (conceptual objects) to being is that “all other conceptions of the intellect are arrived at by addition to being.”⁹ Being is *logically included* in all our primary concepts analogously to the ways the meaning of “color” is logically included in the meaning of “red” and the meaning of “body” is logically included in the meaning of “animal,” which is logically included in the meaning of “man.” (The meaning of “A” is logically included in that of “B” when the information conveyed by “A” is conveyed by “B” but “B” conveys more information than “A.”) This property of predicates cannot be better

represented than by the function/argument syntax for propositions: the primary predicates of language are functions of being and are known (objectified) as such. And that is a cornerstone of Thomistic epistemology.

But in order for us to see that the function/argument syntactical form is a good model of the logical inclusion of being in all other predicates, we must recognize the “something” in existential quantifications. “There is something that is a philosopher and a musician” is not just a logical or syntactical place holder. In the case of what language first comes into existence to communicate about, that “something” has to mean a real existent, for every predicate is objectified as a function of the argument, some existent thing, which is just another way of saying that being is logically included in every predicate. Lest Aquinas’s *intellectual* realism be misunderstood, however, note that Cajetan was perfectly consistent with Aquinas when he added the clarification that what the intellect first knows is *ens concretum quiditati sensibili*: something (*ens concretum*) red (*quiditati sensibili*), something four-sided, something loud, and so on.

Another crucial fact about human knowing, which Aquinas was the first to recognize, is also a cause of the usefulness of existential quantification: we first objectify existence in language, not the way we acquire predicates expressing what things are, but by making judgments using those predicates.¹⁰ Since existence is not among the objects that the senses are able to distinguish from one another or one of the unobservable things that science tells us underlie sensibly distinguishable objects, existence can only become an object of concept when we become aware that what is objectified other than as “an existent,” for example, what is conceptually objectified as moving or oblong, or as a tree or a cloud, has the status of being more than merely objectified. When we become aware of that, we have the knowledge that our language expresses by “There is a cloud” or “A tree exists” or “Something is moving.” That judgment is the way existence first becomes objectified in language. It is symbolized very well by quantification’s separating of the existence assertor from predicates that are functions of variables and having the assertion of existence range over the values of those variables. (That being is first known does not mean that “exists” is the first predicate to enter language. Rather, the meanings of whatever predicates are first must be objectified as belonging to possible existents. But we cannot recognize that fact about the primacy of being until we have acquired the concept of existence by means of judgment.)

By hypothesis, the value we are aware of, when we are aware that moving things or trees are more than terms of cognitional relations, does not consist in these things being related to cognition. So the meaning of “exists” is essentially relative to the meanings of terms like “tree” and “motion,” not to the meaning of “objectified by ‘tree’ or by ‘motion’,” otherwise, for X to exist would be equivalent to being a term of a cognitional relation, the relation of some “Fs” being predicable of it. To exist would amount to being an object of cognition. Rather, the meaning of “object of cognition” is, at bottom, relative to what is more than is expressed by “object of cognition,” namely, to real existence.

Still, for the meaning of “exists” to become an object of concept, we must be aware that what we are judging to exist has been objectified in language as “a tree,”

“something moving,” and so on. What we are judging to exist is something satisfying the meaning of “a tree” or “something moving” not the meaning of “what has been objectified by ‘a tree’ or by ‘something moving’.” But the fact that awareness of the object’s status as object of knowledge accompanies the attribution of “exists” can make it appear that the meaning of “exists” is relative to the status of things as objectified by predicates. So just as the fact that “exists” objectifies something already objectified by other predicates is well symbolized by existential quantification, this fact can also explain the illusion that the value of “exists” is somehow second-order with respect to the predicates we attribute by means of it, the illusion that “exists” expresses a relation to the status of being objectified by another predicate.¹¹ (It can also explain the misleading plausibility of the assertive-redundancy theory of truth.¹²)

The apparent idealism of treating “exists” as a logical word might seem insignificant since none of the philosophers who hold that view intend to draw idealistic consequences from it. However, making existence logical prevents epistemology from doing its job of evaluating what human knowledge achieves in its various phases. The objectification of what exists is the primary goal by which the success of declarative language is to be evaluated. Failing to recognize that the primary goal of language is to objectify things for which to exist is not to be an object of knowledge, will lead to crucial misunderstandings and unsolvable problems.

A third reason for the usefulness of existential quantification, and the most important of all, is implicit in Thomistic principles. The real existence of our primary objects is the *cause* of the truth of attributions of predicates to those objects. (For this discussion, it is sufficient for a cause of X to be something other than X without which X does not exist.) Since language is public, the devices we use to communicate about objects that cannot really exist (cognition-constituted objects) derive from those first used for real existents. Hence the language we use to communicate about cognition-constituted objects must be derived from language that comes into being for objects for which the causally most appropriate and perspicuous way to attribute predicates is by means of existence assertions. Even when we do not use an existence assertion to attribute predicates, existence is logically included in what we attribute. “Joe sees Ann” is true if and only if “Joe’s seeing of Ann exists” is true, because our first predicates are objectified as possible ways of existing, and so actual existence causes the truth of their attribution.¹³ But it follows neither that using existential quantification for cognition-constituted objects attributes real existence to them nor that the existential quantifier has two different *logical* functions, so that different logical notations could distinguish these functions. Using quantification to attribute predicates to cognition-constituted objects amounts to logically *simulating* the assertion of real existence, where “simulate” means that the syntactical and logical relations between the signs for predicates, variables, and quantification are the same as they are for the signs by which we attribute real existence.¹⁴

So building the difference between real existence and its cognition-constituted simulation into the syntax of a language would be logically superfluous. What is

built into logical syntax is, to that extent, something that pertains to objects only as a result of being objects, and what we attribute in attributing real existence is the opposite of that. We distinguish real existence from its simulation outside of logic and “semantically,” by using adjectives like “extracognitional.”

That truth requires the identity of the diversely objectified holds also for statements about cognition-constituted objects. For example, the same set of truth-values is objectified by “ $p \vee q$ ” and by “ $\neg(p \ \& \ \neg q)$.” The same fictional character is objectified by “Gandalf” and by “wizard of the gray rank.” Such objects can be diversely objectified because it is not the case that they are nothing more than the term of *this* relation or *that* relation of objectification. Knowing the identity of these objects as more than the term of this or that cognitional relation amounts to objectifying them as identical in a cognition-constituted model of real existence.¹⁵ That existence is “fictitious” as opposed to genuine but not in the pejorative sense that it involves deception.

Because logical relations first come into apprehension as features of the objectification of real existents, and because all other language derives from language for public objects, the logical relations, as well as the laws based on them, we use in attributing predicates to real entities, and to cognition-constituted objects, will be the same at the epistemological level of our understanding of those objects and attributions. We cannot comprehend a multi-valued logic, for example, unless we know that a propositional variable is either assigned a T or not assigned a T, assigned an F or not assigned an F, assigned an M or not assigned an M. Since public objects are causally primary in language, we must be able to intelligibly explain the way we use language for nonreal objects by means of the language from which all other language is derived, language for real existents. But that places no limits on our creativity in using and developing language.

4. Intentional Existence in Wittgenstein and Thomism

Wittgenstein has many objections against interior states of awareness being what either constitute or cause language’s meaning. I have dealt with most of these objections elsewhere.¹⁶ But his most profound criticism, and the one of greatest importance for human knowledge, has probably received the least attention. Wittgenstein’s point is so fundamental that we easily overlook it. But Thomists have not overlooked it.

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein asks:

What makes an image of him into an image of *him*? Not its looking like him. The same question applies to the expression “I see him now vividly before me” as to the image. What makes this utterance into an utterance about *him*? (177)

However like I make the picture to what it is supposed to represent, it can always be the picture of something else as well. But it is essential to the (mental) image that it is the image of *this* and of nothing else. (389)

For mental states to account for meaning and understanding, their nature must explain how they can be *of* one thing and not another. There is no use postulating the thought *of*, say, John unless the thought is *of John* and not of anybody else. This is so basic that we fail to see what the nature of thought would have to be for a thought to be *of John*.

“I see someone pointing a gun and say ‘I expect a report.’ The shot is fired. – Well that was what you expected; *so did that report somehow already exist in your expectation?*” (442, my emphasis). The normal response would be that the noise did not exist in our expectation. What was in our expectation was something else, perhaps an image of the noise. But the question is what makes that image an image *of* the noise. Wittgenstein continues:

Or is it just that there is some other kind of agreement between your expectation and what occurred; that that noise was not contained in your expectation and merely accidentally supervened when the expectation was being fulfilled? – But no, if the noise had not occurred, my expectation would not have been fulfilled; the noise fulfilled it; it was not an accompaniment of the fulfillment like a second guest accompanying the one I expected. (442)¹⁷

When we talk about, imagine or expect something, we are not talking about, imagining or expecting a substitute for the thing, for example, a picture; we are related to the thing itself. In fact, to be aware that a picture is a picture of a thing, is to be consciously related to the thing, as well as to the picture. But the “picturing” relation does not explain this consciousness; for different methods of projection can make the same picture represent different things. And if we have a built-in “natural” method of projection, how does nature accomplish the feat of establishing the relation between the projection and the projected? If all nature has to work with are entities distinct from the thing, namely, the pictures, nature does not work with the thing itself. Then how does nature make these distinct entities into pictures of things, things that nature has no contact with?

Wittgenstein does not deny that we can be truthfully described as meaning one thing and not another, but he denies that interior mental relations to objects constitute or cause our meaning one thing rather than another. For there is only one way that mental states could accomplish this, so that there would remain no question about the connection between a given mental state and a given thing: the thing itself must exist in the mental state; that is, the mental state must be an existence of this thing and not any other thing. If the existence of the mental state is not an existence of the thing, there will always remain an unbridgeable gap between the mental state and the thing the mental state supposedly explains our cognitive relation to; there will never be an answer to the question why what exists when the mental state exists relates us to this thing and not some other thing. In fact, even if the problem of how a natural method of projection relates to things can be solved, the underlying problem would remain: the result of that method of projection would be that we are aware of the thing itself, not just its picture; for that is what the method of projection is supposed to explain, our awareness that the picture is *of* that very thing; so our consciousness would contain the thing itself.

Hence the argument of 442 is meant to force the mentalist into an affirmative answer to the question “Did that report somehow already exist in your expectation?” because Wittgenstein thinks that would be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the mentalist’s position:

If it weren’t too absurd (my emphasis) we should say that the fact which we wish for must be present in our wish. For how could we wish *just this* to happen if just this isn’t present in our wish? It is quite true to say: The mere shadow won’t do; for it stops short before the object; and we want the wish to contain the object itself. – We want that the wish that Mr. Smith should come into this room should wish that just *Mr. Smith*, and no substitute, should do the *coming*, and no substitute for that, *into my room*, and no substitute for that.¹⁸

Compare this statement of Wittgenstein’s to a passage of Poincot’s considered classic in the Thomistic tradition for expressing what knowledge consists in:

Beings that know ... can receive in themselves that which belongs to the other precisely as it remains distinct in the other. (“We want the wish to contain the object itself. ... Mr. Smith, and no substitute.) Thus, beings that know are that which they are in themselves but are also able to become other than themselves.¹⁹

Anything that changes becomes other than itself in the sense of other than what it was before, and after the change what was formerly other is now what the thing is. But Poincot held that the change from not being aware of X to being aware of it makes X itself exist in my awareness, and therefore in me, while X remains other than what I am and I remain other than X. I have acquired that which belongs to the other as a feature of what I am, and yet what I have acquired still remains other than what I am.

This is indeed a paradox, but there is an alternative to Wittgenstein’s response to it. Just the year before Wittgenstein pointed out this consequence “too absurd” to be held, Maritain had said:

By an apparent scandal to the principle of identity, to know is to be in a certain way something other than what one is; it is *to become a thing other than the self*. ... We are forced, if we would conceive of knowledge *without absurdity* [my emphasis], to introduce the notion of a very special kind of existence ... called *esse intentionale*, ... which is opposed to *esse naturae*, i.e., to the being a thing possesses when it exists in its own nature. ... We must needs, to avoid absurdity, distinguish two ways of having existence. ... How does the thing known exist in the knower? The tree or the stone does not exist in the mind, according to its natural being. Another kind of existence must be admitted; an existence according to which the known will be in the knower and the knower will be the known, an ... existence, whose office is not to posit a thing ... for itself and as a subject, but, on the contrary, for another thing and as a relation. ... *Intentional being* is there as a remedy for the imperfection essential to every created, knowing subject, to wit, the imperfection of possessing a limited natural being and of not being, of itself, everything else.²⁰

For X to be in our awareness, for our awareness to be of X, is for X to exist in our awareness, to exist, not for itself, but for us. What the object is, the features making up its actual or possible being, exist in us, and so we possess the being of the other within ourselves. But we do not possess it by the kind of existence we have prior to knowing, the existence making us just this thing having just these features and not the features of any other thing. With Maritain, I will call the latter existence *entitative existence* and the former *intentional existence*. Entitative existence is what we call “real” existence, when we contrast a real existent with something that is merely an object of imagination or conception. However, Maritain is saying that to be an object of consciousness is a real mode of existence, where “real” is in contrast to what is apparent or fictitious but not genuine. Intentional existence is a secondary and diminished sense of “existence,” but it is a genuine mode of existence, since the relation of awareness of an object could not be what it is were awareness not an existence for the object. Although being an object of awareness is a genuine mode of existence for the object, that genuineness does not make it the real existence that is a state of being more than an object of awareness, and that state is the primary and undiluted sense of “existence.” (Hereafter, I will resume using “real existence” only for that existence which is other than being an object of awareness, entitative existence.)

Not only had the position too absurd to be held already been held, but Wittgenstein could not have come closer to adopting Maritain’s position. He and Maritain agreed that, for interior mental states to explain the behavior we describe by predicates like “imagining,” “expecting,” and “making utterances about,” those states would have to make objects of awareness exist within them. He and Maritain also agreed that this would be absurd in the ordinary sense of “exist.” We can express their agreement in terms of the distinction between psychological and ontological intentionality. Psychological intentionality is the property, belonging to at least some mental states, of being directed toward objects; ontological intentionality is the (alleged) fact that for mental states to be directed toward objects is for the objects to have an existence within the mental states. Wittgenstein’s argument shows that psychological intentionality requires the ontological. Only the very existence of X within consciousness can make the consciousness be of X, directed toward X, rather than of anything else.

Some have argued that intentional existence is superfluous for the explanation of mental states, because those states are directed toward the existence (past, present, future or possible) of things outside of our mental states, not inside of them. Assume someone objected to the intentional existence analysis of expecting the sound of a gun shot by noting that the intentionally existing gun shot is supposed to be immanent to our mental state of expectation, but our expectation of a gun shot (psychological intentionality) is directed at a gun shot outside of our mental state. Likewise, Diogenes was looking for an honest man existing outside of his thoughts, not inside of them.²¹ This objection constitutes an *ignoratio elenchi* of the reason for analyzing conscious states as modes of existence for their objects, an ignorance that Wittgenstein and Maritain were not guilty of. If the conscious state of desiring to find an honest man is an existence within us of what it is to be an honest man,

then, by hypothesis, this state is not a desire to find an honest man existing within us. For it is not a desire of itself, and it would be a desire for itself if it were both the intentional existence of the object and a desire for the intentional existence of the object. When we explain a conscious relation to an object as a mode of existence for the object, we know to begin with that the conscious state is a relation to the object's entitative, extracognitional existence. Postulating the new mode of existence is not meant to provide the existence that the conscious state is a relation to; it is meant to express the nature of the conscious state, the nature of the conscious relation to entitative existence. Intentional existence is a relation to (actual or possible) entitative existence and is conceived as such when it is postulated.

The reason for holding that a conscious relation to an object is another mode of existence for the object is not precisely to account for the fact that the conscious state is a relation to entitative existence. The reason is to account for the fact that a conscious state is a relation to the entitative existence of *this* object not some other.²² The intentional presence of the noise of a gun shot, for instance, explains why our expectation of something existing outside of our expectation is an expectation of that kind of noise and not of something else. In Thomistic terminology, a mental state's being a mode of existence for its object explains the *specification* of the state by this object as opposed to any other.²³ Intentional existence is a causal explanation in the order of formal causality, the order of the characteristics that distinguish what the consciousness of A is from what the consciousness of B is. (What A is, is a cause since it is not identical with what the consciousness of A is but is something without which the consciousness of A would not be what it is.) But this formal cause, what A is, is not a characteristic of what the knower is in the knower's entitative existence; what A is is a formal cause extrinsic to the knower's entitative being; it does not cause the knower to be what the knower is in entitative existence. What A is, however, could not be a cause at all if it did not cause some mode of existence for the knower, since causes cause existence (either directly or by supplying some necessary condition for existence). The object can, therefore, be a cause only by causing the knower to have characteristics that exist otherwise than by entitative existence. And since the characteristics that the object causes the knower to have are what the object is, the object has an existence in the knower other than its entitative existence. Wittgenstein did not express his argument in terms of causality, but that is what is at issue.

Anything short of an expectation's relation to a gun shot existing outside of it being a genuine existence of a gun shot within it cannot explain that relation. Psychological intentionality, rather than making ontological intentionality superfluous, makes it necessary. Those swayed by the argument that ontological intentionality is superfluous do not understand medieval philosophy's reason for positing intentional existence as well as Wittgenstein did, even though Wittgenstein was innocent of any familiarity with medieval philosophy.

But where Wittgenstein thought that the idea led to a *reductio ad absurdum* of the mentalist, Aquinas and his tradition saw the need to posit a mode of existence

distinct from, but entirely relative to, existence in the ordinary sense; for the absurdity does not follow unless there is only one status that constitutes a genuine existence for things. Which view is correct? I will try to show that consciousness is an existence for its objects without using technical Thomistic terminology. This will introduce a discussion of the analysts' traditional problems of sense perception and reference to the nonexistent.

5. What Intentional Existence Is

Consciousness is a relation-to a term or terms. We can draw a contrast between relations and other characteristics in the following way. A relation, for example, your height being equal to mine, can cease to exist as a result of a change in my height with no corresponding change in yours. In fact, your life could have been the same whether or not you were equal to me in height. When the object of your consciousness changes, however, you change. For example, when you see a figure passing by your window, you are different from what you were when you were not seeing it. Your visual experience of the moving figure is one of the features belonging to what you are – the way your height belongs – but your height's being equal to the height of that figure does not. If the figure grew in height while you were not looking, your height would cease being equal to its, but that relation would cease because of a change happening to what it is, not to what you are. But if the other thing passed out of sight, your visual experience of it would also cease, and the cessation of your visual experience of it would be a change occurring in you. Or if the other thing grew in height relative to other things in your visual field, your visual experience would change from being an experience of one set of relative heights to another, and that change would be a change occurring to you even if your own height did not change.

Your visual experience is part of what you are, if anything is, and the *object* of a visual experience is one of the things making the visual experience what it is. A visual experience of a moving, four-sided object is something other than a visual experience of a stationary, three-sided object. If you were having a visual experience of a mountain instead of a piece of paper, one of the features making you what you are would be different from what it is, and so you would be different from what you are in that respect. *Any description of you that would leave out what the objects of your consciousness are would be an incomplete description of what you are.* Being someone thinking about supernovas is different from being someone thinking about cancer. To explain what beings with consciousness are, we have to find a way of getting what they are not (what the objects of their consciousness are) into what they are.

The features constituting what the objects of your consciousness are, are features characterizing what your consciousness is, and, therefore, characterizing what you are. Your consciousness exists within you; hence the features constituting the objects of your consciousness exist within you as features characterizing what you are. They are features that exist within you because they are features of what exists

within you when your consciousness of them exists. If they were not features of that consciousness, that consciousness would not be *of* them.

But when you see a moving figure, the features making the figure what it is do not exist within you the way they exist in it. For example, in it, they have an existence that remains even when no one is having a visual experience of them; they do not have that kind of existence in your visual experience. The shape existing in your visual field may be tall and thin relative to other shapes in the environment; your physical shape may be short and fat relative to those other shapes. The figure existing in your visual field may be in motion relative to the environment; your body may be at rest. The way the features making the object what it is, exist in it by entitative existence; the way they exist within you when you see them is not by entitative existence. We call this other way of existing intentional existence. When you are not seeing a moving, round figure of a certain size, those features may still exist *for the thing* that is moving, round and of that size. When you are seeing it, those features also exist *for you*. Their existence for the thing itself is entitative existence; their existence for you is intentional existence. (When you are not seeing the shape of your thumb, that shape still exists “for you” in the same way that the shape of a tree exists for the tree when you are not seeing the tree. When you see the shape of your thumb, that shape exists “for you” in a different way, the same way the shape of the tree exists for you when you are seeing it.)

6. The Problem of Perception

In addition, seeing a moving figure, as opposed to imagining it, makes you directly (noninferentially) aware of it as an actual entitative existent; for you are aware of something as really existing in the same experience that makes you aware of it as moving and round. The actual entitative existing of your visual object, therefore, is present within your consciousness by a different mode of existence, different from the mode that it is itself. When you see an object, as opposed to imagining it, the entitative existing of the visual object is something existing within you intentionally, because your awareness of that existence exists within you, and what you are aware of is a characteristic of what your awareness is. I will explain how sensing makes us aware of real existence while imagining does not. A position called “the causal theory of perception” is familiar to analysts.²⁴ But Thomists have a different causal theory of perception that can show the analysts’ problem of whether we perceive sense data or physical things to be a false dichotomy.²⁵

Compare seeing a red surface to imagining one. In both cases we are aware of red as a feature of a surface. But in sensation I am aware of the red surface as an element in an environment that is now acting on my sense faculties. For sensing and imagining a red surface to be distinguished in my consciousness, I must sense the red surface as an element in a causally active environment; so I must sense the environment including the red surface as actually acting on me. I must sense the action of the environment in its nature as action. And if I sense that environment

as acting on me, I am aware of it as acting on me in a red manner, rather than a brown or green manner, to the extent that the environment's action makes me aware of red rather than brown or green.

So in sensing the action of an environment containing a red surface as action, I am aware of red as a manner in which the environment is acting on me at the same time that I am aware of red as a feature of a red surface. And these are not two different awarenesses of what red is; they are the same awareness. If they were not the same awareness, either it would not be true that both imagination and sensation make me aware of red as a feature of a red surface or it would not be true that I distinguish seeing from imagining a red surface, for if I am aware of the action of the environment with a red surface as action, I am aware of the environment as acting on me in a red manner.

Awareness of action as action is awareness of it as something coming from a source, an agent; here it is awareness of red as belonging to an agent and of the agent as something red belongs to. So awareness of red as the way an agent acts makes us directly, noninferentially aware of the existence of the agent as an agent, and awareness of red as the way an agent acts is the same as awareness of red as the way an agent presents its existence to the senses. And because it makes us aware of the agent as an agent, awareness of red as the way an agent acts is awareness of red as a feature of the agent. For since a thing is constituted an agent by its action, we can be aware of a red surface, not just as a thing, but as an agent only by being aware of red as something belonging to the surface that constitutes the surface an agent.

Also, when the existence of an agent as an agent is present in consciousness, it is present as the existence of something with a causal disposition by which the thing presents itself in such and such a manner. For action is a communication between things by means of the dispositions through which they act. Awareness of action as action is awareness of it as coming from a source, and hence as presenting the source. But that source is not just an agent; it is an agent having such and such a causal disposition as a feature. So we are aware of action as that which constitutes a causal disposition's being a causal disposition just as we are aware of action as that which constitutes something's cause. Just as we sense red as something belonging to the agent as an agent, since action is what constitutes it an agent, we sense red as belonging to the disposition by which a thing becomes an agent, since a thing acts in this way and not that because it is disposed to act this way. This is what sensing red as a feature of the surface amounts to. Sensing red as an agent's way of acting is sensing red as a feature of the agent only because it is sensing red as presenting, not just the agent, but the disposition through which the agent acts; for a thing acts through features that dispose it to act in this way or that. The senses do not lie. Seeing a surface that looks red is seeing the disposition by which the surface, in these circumstances, reflects red light. Seeing that surface when it looks orange is seeing the *same* disposition, the disposition by which the surface, in these different circumstances, reflects orange light. For in experiencing the reflection of light in its nature as action, we become noninferentially aware of an agent disposed to reflect light in this way in these circumstances.

We could define “sense data” as the action of the environment known as action. To be aware of action as action is to be noninferentially aware of the real existence of the environment acting on us. And it is to be noninferentially aware of the environment as something existing independently of the sense organ, since the organ is receiving, not causing, the action. But this is *not* awareness of the existence of the environment as a cause hidden behind the action. Awareness of being acted on in a red manner as the action of an agent is the same as awareness of the real existence of an agent as acting on us in a red manner, and so the same as awareness of the existence of the agent as having a disposition to act in this manner. In being aware of the environment’s action as the action of an environment containing a red surface, I am aware of the real existence of the environment as containing something extended in two dimensions that is acting on me in a red manner. In imagination, however, we are aware of a red surface as having a feature by which it is capable of acting in a red manner (by which it could act on the senses in a red manner if seen) but not as a feature by which the environment is now acting on us. So imagination does not make us aware of a red surface as an actual entitative existent.

Sensing as opposed to imagining makes us directly aware of actually existing unities of distinct features like color, extension, shape, motion, rest and number. For example, vision can make us aware of three really existing, moving, round figures each occupying a different amount of space in our visual field. So sensing makes us directly, noninferentially, aware of existing physical things. Color is not the same as extension, shape, motion, rest and number. But the experience of color (or tactile resistance) makes us directly aware of objects with those features. We cannot be more directly aware of extension, shape, motion, rest and number than we are in visual experience; yet they are made present to us through the experience of something other than themselves, color (or tactile resistance; and hearing, smelling and tasting can make us aware of number, as well as of auditory, olfactory and gustatory qualities). Likewise, sensing color, since it is an awareness of action as action, makes us directly aware of the real existence of things in which these diverse features are united, even though real existence is other than redness, smoothness, four-sidedness or any of the features that sense faculties can distinguish from one another. If sense data is the action of the environment known as action, awareness of sense data makes us directly aware of existing physical things as color makes us directly aware of objects in which color, extension, shape, motion, rest and number are united. The sense data/physical thing problem is a false dichotomy.

Distinguishing genuine perception from hallucination requires inductive, and therefore causal, reasoning. This use of causal reasoning does not imply that we infer the existence of otherwise unknown causes behind what we perceive. Since genuine sensory awareness is itself causal, the awareness of action as action, the conclusion of our inductive inference is that an experience is a genuine awareness of the action of the environment as action and so a noninferential, direct awareness of the existence of the environment as acting on us, and so a direct awareness of the existence of physical things disposed to act in this manner. In other words, the

conclusion is that an experience is genuinely the kind of causal awareness that it presents itself as. When we conclude that an experience is an hallucination, the conclusion is that the experience is not genuinely what it presents itself as.

7. What Intentional Existence is Not

You sometimes get the impression that the main reason for positing intentional existence is to solve the problem of conscious relations to the nonexistent, in particular, reference to the nonexistent.²⁶ Analyzing sensation has shown that intentional existence is *not* a device invented to explain how our cognitive relations can have nonexistent (nonentitatively existent) terms. Intentional existence is needed to explain our awareness of actual entitative existence in sensation, the primary way of consciously relating to objects on which all our other conscious ways of relating to objects depend. But once we see that even entitative existents need intentional existence in order to be objects of cognition, we should not find cognitive relations to nonentitatively existing objects paradoxical. The presence in consciousness of a nonentitatively existing object is a genuine existence for that object, just as much as the presence in consciousness of an entitatively existing object is a (new) genuine existence for that object. The latter's presence in consciousness is not its entitative existence, but an intentional existence. And if intentional existence can make a real entity present in consciousness, it can make a nonreal entity present in consciousness.

It is also important to understand that the function of existential quantification for cognition-constituted objects is not to assert intentional existence of them. The truth, for instance, that the set of odd numbers is included in the set of integers requires the identity of two *diverse* intentional objects, the set objectified by "set of odd numbers" and one of the sets objectified by "a set included in the set of integers," so the intentional existences of these objects are distinct, not identical. Although the only reality possessed by these objects is that of being known, intentional existence, these distinct objects can be identical because for neither of them is it the case that the object is nothing more than a term of *this* relation of objectification or that and therefore nothing more than what exists intentionally in this way or that. For example, what I can objectify as the empty set I can also objectify as a set included in every set. Knowing the identity of these objects as more than the term of this or that cognitional relation amounts to objectifying them as identical in a fictitious, cognition-dependent ideal existence modeled on real existence, as we have seen. So the reason for postulating that conscious relations to objects are the intentional existence of the objects is not to provide a justification for existential quantification as applied to cognition-constituted objects. Nor does intentional existence provide two meanings for the existential quantifier.

Likewise the role of intentional existence is not to provide a referent for words by which we objectify nonexistents. A purpose of Russell's theory of descriptions, for example, was to show that a sentence like "The present king of France does not exist" does not logically commit us to asserting some form of existence of a thing in

order to assert that the thing does not exist. When we use such sentences, the rules of logic do not commit us to any existence claim. Perhaps Russell's logical points were sufficient to refute Meinong on mental existence (discussing Meinong is beyond this chapter's scope). But the postulation of intentional existence in the Thomistic (and Wittgensteinian) sense does not result from our being *logically* committed to intentional existence by the way we talk about nonentitatively existing objects. Intentional existence is necessary for our behavior of talking about nonexistents – and real existents as well – by *causal*, not logical, necessity. Similarly, the postulation of the intentional existence of propositions, as distinct from sentences, is based on causal necessity, not on whether our ways of talking about beliefs or truths logically necessitate quantifying over propositions.²⁷

Russell's theory of descriptions explains our conscious use of "The present king of France does not exist" or "The present king of France is bald" without the logical necessity of postulating the existence of an otherwise nonexistent king. But it neglects to tell us that understanding "There is/is not something that is presently king of France and is bald" requires that what it is to be a king, what it is to be bald, what France is, and what the meanings of "the present," "there is," "not" and "something" are, exist intentionally in awareness. Assume you receive a telegram containing the words "Your spouse has died," if you understand English, when you read those words you are consciously related to what death is. If you were not consciously related to what death is, the cause of your being shocked and sorrowful would be your awareness that the physical string of marks, "died," is what it is, or something equally trivial. That awareness of what death is, however, is not something separate from, behind, or parallel to your awareness of what the string of marks "died" is when you are aware of using that string of marks as a sign.²⁸ And awareness is an intentional existence for its objects.

Concerning cognitional relations to the nonexistent, it is difficult to go further into a discussion of "reference" to the nonexistent until analysts provide a clearer treatment of reference to the existent. I agree with Richard Rorty's (disparaging) remark that "'reference' is a term of philosophical art and one afflicted by equivocity."²⁹ (Of the treatments I have seen, Fred Sommers's comes the closest to being acceptable.³⁰) This problem is exacerbated by the common analytic view that reference determines one's "ontology."³¹ But reference in this context is sometimes opposed to quantification,³² while Quine identifies it with existential quantification.³³ And what does picking out individuals have to do with such statements of "ontology" as traditionally understood, and not just by Thomists, as "Everything either exists in itself or in another," "Every existent is either capable of not existing or incapable of not existing," "Everything is either caused to exist or is not caused to exist," or "There are two modes of existence, intentional and entitative"?

In any case, taking intentionality in the "ontological" sense we can say this. To whatever extent reference to a real existent may involve (whatever "involve" might mean, for example, "has as a prior condition" or "is constituted by") a cognitional relation to a real existent, reference requires intentional existence; cognitional relations to real existents require intentional existence, as sense perception shows.

But since intentional existence for real existents is required at the very foundation of our conscious states, nothing prevents intentional existence from functioning at other levels, cognitional relations to the nonexistent included. If even real existents require another mode of existence in order to be objectified, what prevents this other mode of existence from objectifying what does not have real existence? The necessity for postulating intentional existence is causal, and the behavior of objectifying nonexistents linguistically, for example, talking about unicorns, requires no causes over and above the causes required for objectifying real entitative existents.

Notes

- 1 Aquinas used the terminology “intentional existence” only infrequently. But *QDV*, 2, 2 shows how significant the concept was for him.
- 2 *QDV*, 1, 1.
- 3 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. Rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), 334.
- 4 In conversation, Hilary Putnam told me that “exists” is a logical word. For a critique of this view, see Barry Miller, *The Fullness of Being: A New Paradigm for Existence* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002). Any apparent support for this view from Frege was disarmed by Fred Sommers, *The Logic of Natural Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).
- 5 Bertrand Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1919), 164.
- 6 *De Trin.*, 5, 1.
- 7 Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, Gerald B. Phelan, trans. (New York, NY: Scribners, 1959), 98.
- 8 Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 96f.
- 9 *QDV*, 1, 1.
- 10 This point concerns psychological genesis of the concept of existence; so Geach’s criticism of Gilson does not apply. See P. T. Geach, *Logic Matters* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 263ff.
- 11 Aquinas does recognize a second-order meaning for *est*, to “signify the truth of a proposition.” *ST I*, q. 48, a. 2, ad. 2.
- 12 John C. Cahalan, *Causal Realism: An Essay on Philosophical Method and the Foundations of Knowledge* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1985), 95f.
- 13 A language need not have anything explicitly corresponding to the existential quantifier, but existence is logically included in the attribution of predicates to the primary objects of any natural language. And since the rest of language derives from language for real existents, logical symbolism that eliminates variables of quantification can eliminate them for the real existents that are our primary objects, as well as for objects that cannot really exist.
- 14 Aquinas, *In Meta.*, 4, 1, 540.
- 15 On what causes the identity of nonreal objects as more than terms of this or that objectification, see Cahalan, *Causal Realism*, 145–54, 218–19.
- 16 John C. Cahalan, “If Wittgenstein Had Read Poincaré: Recasting the Problem of Signs and Mental States,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (1994), 297–319.

- 17 *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1958); see also 95, 195, 389, 428.
- 18 Wittgenstein, *The Blue Book* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 36.
- 19 John Poinset, *Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus*, Vol. III, *Naturalis Philosophiae*, Reiser ed. (Turin: Marietti, 1937), 4 p., q. 4, a. 1, (Reiser, 104).
- 20 Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 112–14. Maritain's work appeared in 1932; *The Blue Book* lectures began in 1933.
- 21 Roderick M. Chisholm, "Intentionality," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 4, Paul Edwards, ed. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1967), 201–204.
- 22 Is intentional existence superfluous for truth because judgment is concerned about how things exist in reality, not in the mind? Judgments are also concerned about the sentences in which actual or possible real existents are objectified. Knowing the truth of sentences requires knowing how the words of the sentences are being used. Awareness of the meanings of words is another *of* relation that requires the intentional existence of the term of the relation, so that judgment can be a relation to the extracognitional existence of this and not that.
- 23 Aquinas, *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 1. Yves R. Simon, *Introduction to Metaphysics of Knowledge*, Vukan Kuic and Richard J. Thompson, trans. (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1990), 6–9.
- 24 Hilary Putnam, *The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body, World* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 10, 16, 22 and *passim*.
- 25 Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 84, a. 3. Yves Simon, "An Essay on Sensation," in *Philosopher at Work: Essays by Yves R. Simon*, Anthony O. Simon, ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 94–96.
- 26 Chisholm, "Intentionality," 201–204.
- 27 Simon, *Metaphysics of Knowledge*, 141–48.
- 28 Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 25, a. 3.
- 29 Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 289.
- 30 Sommers, *Logic of Natural Language*, 49–68.
- 31 See, for example, W. V. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1969), 26–68.
- 32 See, for example, Stephen Neale, "Descriptions," in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000).
- 33 W. V. Quine, "On What There Is," in *From a Logical Point of View* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 1–19.

Chapter Eleven

On Analytical Thomism

Brian J. Shanley

1. Introduction

Analytic philosophers have become increasingly interested in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. Several factors help to explain this phenomenon. A remote cause is the work of Peter Geach, who both modeled and validated serious analytic study of Thomas; many of those writing in the analytic tradition today owe an obvious debt to Geach. Another remote cause has been the renewed interest in medieval philosophy among analytic philosophers. More proximately, the emergence of philosophy of religion as an accepted analytic speciality has also spurred interest in Thomas. As a result, Aquinas is now taken seriously as a philosopher by many trained within the Anglo-American tradition that previously would have been inclined to consign him to the pre-Frege dustbin of benighted thinking.

Indeed analytic interest in Aquinas has now reached the point where some writing in this vein consider themselves to be “Analytic Thomists.” A recent issue of *The Monist* (vol. 80, no. 4 [October 1997]) is entirely devoted to Analytical Thomism and a forthcoming volume in the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* series will explore the same topic. While Thomists of every stripe should be glad to see Aquinas get his analytical due, many traditional readers of Aquinas will doubtless wonder whether “Analytical Thomism” is oxymoronic in the same way that “Transcendental Thomism” seemed so. Can one really be both a Thomist and an analytic philosopher? Are the basic philosophical commitments of the one compatible with those of the other? A close look at *The Monist* volume, which is the purpose of this essay, will hopefully shed some light on this topic.

The obvious first question to be considered regarding Analytical Thomism is, *Quid sit?* The advisory editor, John Haldane, offers the only definition in the volume:

Analytical Thomism is not concerned to appropriate St. Thomas for the advancement of any particular set of doctrines. Equally, it is not a movement of pious exegesis. Instead, it seeks to deploy the methods and ideas of twentieth-century philosophy – of the sort dominant within the English-speaking world – in connection with the broad framework of ideas introduced and developed by Aquinas. Form, matter, existence, individuation, concepts, mental utterances, good and evil all get some treatment in the pages that follow (485).

Each of Haldane's sentences raises some important questions. Right off the bat the negative contrasts make it clear that Analytical Thomism understands itself to be offering some kind of alternative or nontraditional reading of Aquinas; no names are named, but it is clear that Analytical Thomists have some problems with non-analytical Thomists. Firstly, it is claimed that Analytical Thomism is not committed to "the advancement of any particular set of doctrines." What does this mean? Are the doctrines in question religious or philosophical? How could one possibly identify oneself as a Thomist and not thereby be committed to certain particular doctrines of St Thomas himself? Are there no basic doctrines ingredient in Thomism of any kind? Secondly, Analytical Thomism does not involve "pious exegesis." Is this meant to exclude piety and exegesis or just the former? Can there be a Thomism without at least some intellectual piety? Can one be a Thomist without the ability to do textual exegesis informed by a knowledge of medieval philosophy and theology? Thirdly, is Analytical Thomism a methodological approach to Aquinas or is it rather an attempt to reinterpret Aquinas in the light of the leading ideas of analytic philosophy? Fourthly, is it enough to be a Thomist that one discuss some interesting central concepts in Aquinas? Haldane does not provide answers to these questions and it is not at all clear that the other contributors to the volume would agree on a common answer.

2. Putnam on Analytical Thomism

Hilary Putnam opens the volume with "Thoughts Addressed to an Analytical Thomist" (487–99). Putnam acknowledges that he is not an Analytical Thomist because he is outside the Roman Catholic tradition and because he has a different approach to philosophy; the former reason is noteworthy as an example of how Thomism is perceived by some to entail a religious commitment. Putnam's remarks are offered as friendly questions meant to engage Analytic Thomists in dialogue. Presumably the friendly nature of the queries originates in a common opposition to certain antimetaphysical, antirealist and antireligious strains in contemporary philosophy.

Putnam's first set of questions concerns arguments for the existence of God. Putnam rejects the formerly widespread and facile analytic dismissal of the classical proofs as patently invalid, while acknowledging that the premises are questionable because of their metaphysical presuppositions. He argues, however, that the conception of reason embodied in the arguments reflects deep intuitions that have not been refuted by modern science and so need to be taken seriously. But after having defended the traditional project in this way, Putnam goes on to pose a problem that Thomists do need to pay greater attention to: How do these philosophical "proofs," and the resulting conception of God as at the head of the metaphysical line, connect up with religious belief? Surely for Aquinas such argumentation is not foundational for belief, so how does it relate to belief? A step towards answering this question in a way that takes into account contemporary analytic discussion can be found in Velecky's underappreciated *Aquinas' Five Arguments in the Summa Theologiae*.¹

The second set of questions posed by Putnam concerns predication with respect to God. Putnam wants to argue that religious language is incommensurable with empirical description and scientific theorizing without, however, getting trapped in language-game compartmentalism because he believes there is a universal potentiality for religious questioning. What is needed, then, is a way to account for meaningful religious language about God that respects its religious context without thereby sealing it off compartmentally from all other kinds of discourse. Putnam sees Aquinas's theory of analogical predication as trying to do just that. He is dubious, however, that Aquinas really improves on Maimonides, specifically regarding how a simple God can be meaningfully said to have attributes. I would argue that Putnam does not fully understand Aquinas's doctrine of analogy, but it is more important here to acknowledge how someone sympathetically reading Aquinas from outside the tradition can offer fresh perspectives and raise critical questions. Putnam is surely right, for example, that Thomists need to recognize the way in which "univocal" and "literal" are context-dependent terms that have no simple meaning and that the nonliteral use of religious language cannot be readily explained in terms of a scientific theory.

3. Davies on Aquinas

The next contribution, by Brian Davies, OP, on "Aquinas, God, and Being," is the most significant in the collection because it bears on the central doctrine of God as *esse per se subsistens* and the degree to which the metaphysics underpinning that claim can be made credible analytically (500–20). Davies wants to salvage the analytic respectability of Aquinas's teaching by steering what he takes to be a middle course between traditional views (for example, Gilsonian) of *esse per se subsistens* as the crown jewel of Thomistic metaphysics on the one hand and the analytic dismissals of the doctrine as either symptomatic of sophistry or evidence of pre-Fregean confusion on the other. Davies's middle course, however, steers quite closely along the analytic bank. He begins by endorsing the Kantian claim that existence is not a predicate in the following sense: to say that exist(s) can never serve to tell us anything about any object or individual (that is, something that can be named). He offers three arguments in favor of this view. First is a *reductio ad absurdum* claim that to deny his view, to claim that existence does tell us something about something, leads to the conclusion that all positive predications of existence must be true and all negative predications must be false. Second, he argues that the phrase exist(s) is really equivalent to saying that some X are Y; for example, to say that "Some fun-loving Welshmen exist" is equivalent to "Some Welshmen are fun-loving." So just as "some" does not ascribe a property to something, neither does "exist(s)." Davies's third argument borrows from Frege and C. J. F. Williams and presumes a parallel between the ascription of existence and the ascription of number. Affirming the existence of something is really nothing other than the denial of the number nought to whatever object or concept is said to exist. Statements of existence are really statements of number, and just as the assertion of

number does not ascribe a property to some object, neither does the assertion of existence.

Davies then entertains and dismisses four possible objections to this interpretation of existence in a somewhat cursory and sometimes problematical way, but these objections are not relevant here. The objection that matters most, of course, is that this post-Frege understanding of existence seems *prima facie* far removed from Aquinas's doctrine of *esse*. The bold, central, and to me utterly incredible claim of Davies, however, is that if we dig a little deeper into what Aquinas says about God as *ipsum esse subsistens* and the source of the *esse* of creatures, we will discover that his understanding of *esse* is quite compatible with the post-Frege understanding of existence! Davies purports to find textual evidence for this reading of *esse* in the opening chapter of the *De ente*, where he claims that Aquinas holds that "the verb 'to be' is used in at least two distinct ways" (509). What is actually in the text, however, is a standard reference to the Aristotelian doctrine of how *ens* (not *esse* or "to be") is said in two ways: either according to the ten categories or as joining the subject and predicate in a true proposition; in the latter sense even privations can be said "to be" in some sense, as when we say that "blindness is in the eye." Davies asserts that this distinction is tantamount to a distinction between "sentences which tell us something about a distinct individual and sentences which look or sound as though they were doing this, though in fact they are not" (510). Before considering how Davies construes Aquinas on existence-statements regarding individuals, it is important to note two serious flaws in Davies's procedure. The first is the failure to attend to the distinction between *esse* and *ens* in Aquinas's Latin texts; the two terms are not interchangeable, since Aquinas thinks every created being (*ens*) is composed of two distinct principles: *esse*, as the fundamental actuality making the *ens* to be; and *essentia*, as a potency for *esse* that formally determines the kind of existence the *ens* exercises. Davies's use of English translations sometimes occludes these important distinctions; as already noted, Davies implies that Aquinas is going to explain "to be" in the sense of existence or *esse* when it is really *ens* that he is talking about. This leads to a second and related difficulty. In his footnote regarding the distinction between the two senses of being, Davies refers to three putatively parallel passages where he claims that Aquinas is making the same distinction: *In Meta.* bk. V, lect. 9; *ST I*, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2; and *ST I*, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2 (517, n. 23). The first and third passages concern how *ens* is said in two ways, but the second passage is really about something else. There Aquinas explains how *esse* can be said in two ways: as *actus essendi* or as signifying composition in a proposition. It is the former sense of *esse*, as *actus essendi*, that Davies cannot easily account for and his strategy therefore seems to be to ignore it by citing texts where Aquinas is discussing Aristotle's doctrine of being. It hardly seems fair to Aquinas, however, to explain his doctrine of being in terms of the Aristotelian distinction between the categorical and predication senses of being.

Davies argues that, for Aquinas, statements about an individual do not tell us that it exists because genuine statements can only be in terms of the categories and being is not a category. Hence if being and existence are interchangeable, and

neither is categorical, then statements of existence tell us nothing genuine about an individual. The only genuine ascriptions that we can make about individuals are in terms of the categories and hence in terms of form. The ultimate reduction of all genuine predication to form is really at the root of Davies's interpretation of Aquinas. In Davies's own words:

On Aquinas's account, the existence of Thor is reportable by saying what Thor is. "No entity without identity," says W. V. Quine. Or, as Aquinas, puts it, existence is given by form (*forma est essendi principium*). "Every mode of existence," says Aquinas, "is determined by some form" (*quodlibet esse est secundum formam*). For Aquinas, we cannot describe something by saying that, as well as being feline, intelligent and so on, it also exists. To exist is to be or have form. Hence, for instance, Aquinas can only make sense of statements like "Thor exists" (*Thor est*) on the understanding that they tell us what something is. *Thor est*, said of Thor the cat, means, for Aquinas, "Thor is a cat" (511).

Davies accords primacy to form or essence as determinative of *esse*; *esse* is just the denial of the number nought with respect to what can be described by form. Although I cannot make a long case here, I believe that Davies misrepresents Thomas's doctrine of the relationship between *esse* and essence. While it is true that Thomas does speak of form or essence as causing *esse* (*forma dat esse*), Cornelio Fabro and others have taught that such sayings need to be read carefully in the light of the more fundamental doctrine of *esse* as foundational act and form as potency to that act. Form is a real co-principle of being and constitutes every being as a specific kind of being with specific causal powers, but it is related as potency in the transcendental order to the *esse* that it receives from God. Davies's treatment obscures the differences (1) between the transcendental (God-creature) and the predicamental (creature to creature) orders, (2) between efficient and formal causation, and (3) between concept formation and judgments of existence.

Davies goes on to show how this reading of the *essence-esse* relationship allegedly illuminates Aquinas's doctrine of God as *esse per se subsistens* and the *causa esse*. To describe creatures as having *esse* is not to attribute a property to them. All that we do when we ascribe *esse* to something is to say that the thing in question is more than the meaning of words, that we are saying what is the case. Davies says that Aquinas's "idea is that in truly knowing what, for example, a cat (as opposed to a unicorn) is, we are latching on to the fact that cats have *esse*" (514). Davies thus concludes that "Aquinas's teaching on *esse* is decidedly matter of fact and even pedestrian. For him, we lay hold of the *esse* of things by living in the world and by truly saying what things are" (514). When we ask the question "Why is there any world at all?" as opposed to what accounts for this or that particular thing, we get to God who, as *ipsum esse subsistens*, explains how creatures are more than the meaning of words. To say that God is *ipsum esse subsistens* is ultimately just a shorthand way of saying that God is not created because God is not composed; it is an exercise in the *via negativa*. Whatever accounts for particular beings must somehow transcend those beings. Davies concludes his essay:

I have tried to expound Aquinas's teaching so as to indicate that, if nothing else, it is something of which a modern philosopher might well take account since it accords with what a modern philosopher might well want to say on the topic of existence. I am tempted to say that it is something of which a modern *analytical* philosopher might take account; but I cannot really claim to know what makes a philosopher analytic (517).

In these words surfaces the major problem facing the entire Analytical Thomist project: the tendency to domesticate Aquinas metaphysically so that he fits neatly into analytic categories. Without referring explicitly to Davies, Stephen Theron nonetheless aptly characterizes the import of an approach like Davies's in the concluding essay: "What emerges, after all, is a view of the medieval colossus as not out of harmony with the later, supposedly more sophisticated researches of Frege and the tradition in which Frege stands, at the same time as Frege himself can by this route more easily appear as the continuator of an original *philosophia perennis*" (614). To use the language of Gilson, Frege-friendly readings of Aquinas end up as some form of essentialism. Aquinas's authentic doctrine of being – with its emphasis on *esse* as the *actus essendi*, the act of all acts and the perfection of all perfections – simply cannot be harmonized with post-Frege analytical dogmas. It is rather the case that Aquinas challenges those dogmas. What is really called for in Analytical Thomism is a thoughtful and critical confrontation with prevailing analytic dogmas on existence as in David Braine's *The Reality of Time and the Existence of God*.² Any version of Analytic Thomism that gives up defending the uniqueness and richness of Aquinas's decidedly pre-Frege notion of *esse* has given up the game. The best of the essays in this volume, and the model for the kind of Analytical Thomism that would be salutary, demonstrate not how Aquinas fits neatly onto the analytic map, but rather how he does not.

4. Lamont on Divine Simplicity

John Lamont's "Aquinas on Divine Simplicity" begins with an interesting discussion of form (521–38). He argues that we can make good sense of Aquinas on the distinction between form in *esse naturale* and form in *esse intentionale* through Frege's distinction between *Eigenschaft* (property) and *Merkmal* (characteristic). The form as thought (*esse intentionale*) is the same as the form in the material object (*esse materiale*); there is no difference in the characteristics of the form, but rather the form as thought takes on a property. Lamont argues that Aquinas's doctrine of form is superior to Frege's doctrine of concepts because Aquinas does not have to account for abstract objects. Lamont rightfully stresses, in the face of persistent misunderstanding, that the form as thought for Aquinas is not a mental image; knowing involves formal identity, not a representational matching of image and original. Overall Lamont's discussion of form is intriguing, yet it is flawed by his failure to respect Aquinas's distinction between form and essence.

Lamont goes on to apply this account of form to the question of divine simplicity, but it turns out that his main interest is what divine simplicity implies for divine necessity. The *crux interpretatum* is whether God's existence is necessary in a logical sense. Brian Davies and Patterson Brown want to argue that necessary existence can be attributed to God (as in the *tertia via*) without that entailing a commitment to the thesis that "God exists" is logically necessary. But as Lamont shows, Aquinas argues that the identity of essence and *esse* in God does entail that "God exists" is logically necessary, only we cannot see this because the divine essence is beyond our grasp; it is true *per se*, but not *quoad nos*. Lamont asserts that Brown and Davies's denial of this claim is rooted in their underlying adherence to Frege (and Geach). According to this view, "God exists" cannot be logically necessary because existence is a property of concepts, an assertion that there is an object answering to the concept. Since existence is not a property of objects, it cannot be a logically necessary property of God. As we have already seen, Fregean metaphysical commitments skew the interpretation of Aquinas. Lamont argues that there is a modified Fregean way of understanding how existence can be a necessary to God if we see being actual as a unique characteristic mark (*Merkmal*) of God rather than as a normal property (*Eigenschaft*).

5. Jacobs and Zeis on Form and Cognition

Aquinas's notion of form is central also to Jonathan Jacobs and John Zeis's "Form and Cognition: How to Go Out of Your Mind" (539–57). While it is unfortunate that Jacobs and Zeis lump Aristotle and Aquinas together in what they describe as an "Aristotelian-Thomistic" approach to cognition, they rightly stress the centrality of formal causation in both cases. It is formal causation that obviates the modern problem of how the mind gets back to the world. Jacobs and Zeis point out that Aquinas's doctrine of abstraction is radically different from post-Lockean doctrines. It is not a matter of empiricist abstraction wherein the input is a set of particular ideas and the output is some kind of general image or idea. The authors argue that the doctrine of formal causation, and so formal identity in knowing, that is an ingredient in Aquinas's notion of concept formation, allows Aquinas to avoid the skeptical problems endemic to modern doctrines of abstraction as typified in Hume, Putnam, Quine and Kripke. Jacobs and Zeis then discuss how to place Aquinas's doctrine of cognition on the contemporary epistemological map. They argue that it is primarily externalist, non-evidentialist and natural, but that it also incorporates elements of foundationalist, coherence, internalist and normative theories of cognition. This leads to the simple but important conclusion: "The standard dichotomies in the contemporary discussion of the justification of belief do not apply to the A/T [Aristotelian-Thomistic] theory of knowledge" (553). Contrary to Davies, who interprets Aquinas as confirming contemporary presuppositions, Jacobs and Zeis find him challenging them.

6. Stump on Freedom, Intellect and Will

Eleonore Stump comes to rather the same conclusion in her “Aquinas’s Account of Freedom: Intellect and Will” (576–97). Stump wants to argue that Aquinas’s view of freedom is not voluntaristic because he associates freedom not with the will alone, but rather with will *and* intellect: “the dynamic interactions of intellect and will yield freedom as an emergent property or systems-level feature” (576). This aspect of Aquinas’s account is often obscured by a narrow focus on *liberum arbitrium* that neglects the complex interplay of intellect and will in the various other moments of a human act. While I think Stump’s aversion to voluntarism inclines her too far in the opposite direction of intellectualism, she nonetheless does an excellent job of highlighting how both freedom of action and freedom of will are systems-level properties.

Stump argues that Aquinas is not a compatibilist because he believes the causal chain resulting in a voluntary act has to originate in principles intrinsic to the agent. She holds that “if something extrinsic to the agent were to act on the will with efficient causation, then the tie of the will to the intellect, from which acts of the will get their voluntary character, would be broken, and so the act of the will wouldn’t be voluntary” (585). This is a debatable claim, however, given what Aquinas holds about the relationship between God and the will. Stump considers the God–will problem to be restricted to theology’s consideration of grace, but it is clear from many passages in Aquinas that God is operative in the will quite apart from grace. This would imply that while Aquinas is surely not a compatibilist in the normal sense of the term, he does think that human freedom is compatible with divine causation. Aquinas does not fit neatly into either compatibilism or incompatibilism. As for the other contemporary category, libertarianism, if it is understood to entail the principle of alternative possibilities or the freedom to do otherwise, then Aquinas does not really fit here either. As Stump shows, Aquinas does hold that *liberum arbitrium* entails the ability to do otherwise, but ultimately that freedom is rooted in a freedom that does not involve the will’s ability to do otherwise. We are not free with respect to alternative possibilities when it comes to the will’s natural inclination to the *bonum commune* or ultimate end. When confronted with God the ultimate Good, the will cannot will; the blessed in heaven freely will God, but they cannot do otherwise. Stump argues that what really matters then for freedom is not the presence or absence of alternative possibilities, but rather that the agent’s volition causally originates internally from his own intellect and will. Stump therefore concludes that Aquinas does not fit neatly into any preexisting libertarian mold. Ultimately the will is free in Aquinas not because of its independence from intellect, but rather precisely because of its relationship to intellect.

7. Theron’s Assessment of Analytical Thomism

The title of Stephen Theron’s concluding essay reveals a negative verdict on the project of Analytical Thomism: “The Resistance of Thomism to Analytical and

Other Patronage” (611–18). Theron considers Analytical Thomism as a capitulation to the *Zeitgeist* that is incompatible with Thomism’s claim to be a *philosophia perrennis*. He roundly and harshly condemns a long list of analytic *corruptores*. Theron seems to think that one cannot be a Thomist without abandoning analytic philosophy altogether. While I am sympathetic to some of Theron’s worries, I do not share his deep pessimism about Analytic Thomism. Thomists not trained in analytic philosophy can learn much from analytical readers of Aquinas. Analytic Thomists can help non-Analytic Thomists to see new themes in Aquinas, to pose new questions to him, to push his thought in new directions, to acknowledge areas where his thinking is no longer tenable, and so bring his thought into the contemporary arena. The logical and argumentative rigor of the best of analytic philosophy can indeed be a necessary corrective to overly pious expository readings of Aquinas; St Thomas himself can stand such scrutiny, even if some of his followers cannot.

The influence needs to go in both directions, however, because one of the principal flaws in many analytic readings of Aquinas is an astonishing unfamiliarity with non-analytic treatments. One often has the impression that Analytic Thomists are writing only for each other, oblivious to the fact that many of their points have already been made by non-analytic scholars; they often merely reinvent the Thomistic wheel. They need to read more non-English, non-analytic literature. They need to become more historically informed. They need a greater familiarity with Aquinas’s larger theological picture. Analytic and non-Analytic Thomists have much to teach each other if only they would listen. Together they would have much to offer current analytical philosophy by offering a way of thinking that transcends the standard problematic by challenging the dogmas and idols of the age.

8. Concluding Remarks

There is cause for optimism then about the stimulus to Thomism that could come from Analytical Thomism. As noted in this discussion, however, the major cause for concern is metaphysical. At the heart of Aquinas’s philosophy is his understanding of being as ultimately rooted in *esse* as *actus essendi*. This does not fit with analytical metaphysical dogmas. Here then is where the ultimate test of allegiance lies. It is possible, of course, to be an analytic philosopher who offers interesting readings of Aquinas without any commitment to his doctrine of being. But I would not call such a one a Thomist, nor, I presume, would he call himself one. What I am arguing is that to be a Thomist of any stripe requires some primary commitment to Thomas’s metaphysics; without that commitment, one may be an interpreter or even a specialist, but one is not a Thomist. It is a matter of debate, of course, what other doctrines of St. Thomas one must adhere to in order to be a Thomist and surely the items are broader than the metaphysics of *esse*. But however one draws the Thomistic circle, the core must be *esse* in St Thomas’s sense, not Frege’s.

Notes

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- 1 Lubor Velecky, *Aquinas' Five Arguments in the Summa Theologiae 1a 2, 3* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994).
- 2 David Braine, *The Reality of Time and the Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Chapter Twelve

The Resistance of Thomism to Analytical and Other Patronage

Stephen Theron

1. Introduction

Western intellectual history, viewed as the way things occurred, simultaneously or in a time sequence, requires interpretation even more substantively than does history in general. This is because being a history of specifically intellectual activity it is a history of a type of activity that necessarily includes concurrent self-interpretation, as he who understands, understands that he understands. There is, though, a sense in which *all* human activity is intellectual, as, for Aquinas, the intellectual soul is *forma corporis*.¹ Hence it is that any piece of historiography is necessarily a work of interpretation of what has happened, if only because it is never in the first place a record of what happened but of *what was done*, only as a result of which (together with the interplay of, for example, meteorological happenings or accidents of health) certain things happened. All the same, in a history of theoretical intellect the bond of interpretation with things thought or said will be that much closer than it is with things done as recorded in the various histories of practical intellect.

Now on one such interpretation the falling into disrepute of the outlook (more *Anschauung* than system) of Aquinas and even of the Aristotelians generally, because one accepted the findings of Galileo and the corresponding revolutionary Cartesianism, was a simple case of “progress.” The earlier view is superseded by the later in a twist in the spiral of sophistication unwinding itself indistinguishably from the mere flow of time. Proponents of this view commonly gave cause to question it, however, by their conspicuous refusal to see the medievals as making a progress beyond classicism.²

That Cartesianism rather than medieval thought might with more true reason be counted as degeneration, and hence as more of an incubus upon, than a help to, the undoubted progress of natural science and technical understanding, is now suggested by an equally undoubted progress in historical scholarship. It has progressed by freeing itself from the metaphysical dogma of progress. Such scholarship has shown how Cartesianism, and hence Kantianism, have pursued a development constrained by certain aspects of Jesuit scholasticism which itself derived from Scotus and the Franciscan school generally. These schools in turn arose, perhaps deliberately, in opposition to the “Dominican” school of Thomas

Aquinas.³ This Thomist school never died out, however, and it flourished conspicuously in the sixteenth century, as much among Calvinists as among Catholics. Hence its failure to merge with, still less direct, the Enlightenment philosophy was as much a result of the (political) opposition between laity and clergy as of anything else.

Here one might seem to imply, as indeed is often merely assumed, that Thomism could well be taken up into a synthesis. Thus the openness of Thomism to truth wherever it can be found is often stressed. At this point, though, two questions arise, which are really one: what kind of *exchange* could there be in this? Where else is truth found? To ask these questions in skeptical vein would imply a view of Thomism as the bearer of philosophy as such, only accidentally known by the name of a particular man, rather as another man, Aristotle, became known as *the* philosopher.⁴ This suggestion, though surprising, is part, I would claim, of the way that any Thomism recognizable as such has to understand itself. But if this is so it is necessary to ask whether those who have not merely sought as desirable but often just assumed as possible a synthesis or reconciliation with “modern thought” have not been misled by extra-philosophical considerations, from religious idealism to the need to conform to the pluralism of the politico-cultural scene. St Thomas himself, indeed, sought agreement with adversaries, but never so as to dissolve his own rocklike conceptions in a mix with their contraries. He sought rather to find a place for whatever truths his adversaries acknowledged within his own scheme, where he thought they best belonged.

Much turns upon the meaning of “own” here. Must a system of philosophy be one’s “own” system? This is certainly not how natural scientists for the most part see their work. One contributes to a common effort, as there exists a common desire to know the common truth (analogous to the common good). This surely was the spirit of Aristotle, for whom first philosophy was the universal science of first principles, needed by all researchers. On the other hand, we have found, with Maritain, reason to stress that the creative insight needed to “capture” the common truth is often the property of one outstanding man.

Thus for Aquinas too, although he stressed against Arabian views that knowledge was a personal relation (“It is ... this man who thinks”), yet what was knowable was common, and questions as to styles of presenting it or ways of viewing it (as in our talk of “models”) were not substantively scientific.

Here, though, a difficulty arises for those working in our pluralistic milieu. Aquinas was a theologian. He spoke of philosophers as of a defunct or alien class of Greeks and heathen. He certainly did not speak of Christian philosophy. He propounded indeed the distinction between truths naturally known and truths supernaturally revealed, but these are moments or aspects governing his whole outlook, not separable parts within a composite system or body of doctrine. One cannot take the one and leave the other without modifying what one leaves behind, and this is clear not only in his moral thought but also in his general metaphysics, both of which allow for enlightenment from above. People suspect this to be the truth about the Thomist corpus but they are often unwilling to face up to it, especially, strangely, if they are Catholic apologists or, less strangely, professional

philosophers in the tradition of enlightenment and analysis, who work in universities, as did Aquinas himself, which have philosophy or arts faculties separated from the faculty of theology.

2. Aquinas and Analytical Thomism

It seems to be this state of mind which leads Alasdair MacIntyre, for example, to state that "Aquinas turns out to be an unexpectedly marginal figure in the history [of ethics] which I am writing," viz. his *After Virtue*. This book, however, was not a history but a work of moral philosophy. As such it has only suffered from this marginalization of the decidedly non-marginal Aquinas. MacIntyre expressly objects to Aquinas's attempt to state comprehensively the truth of our moral nature. He does not see that Aquinas's creative thinking is inseparable (though distinguishable) from his retailing of a tradition into which it is senseless not to try to insert oneself.

In later work (for example, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*)⁵ MacIntyre rectifies his earlier prejudice but fails to rid himself of incoherence as between the claims of tradition and those of detached scientific analysis. We encounter talk about narrative discourse where we are entitled to expect discrimination between the true and the false, the just and the unjust, the rational and the less than rational. Traditionalism, indeed, is the opposite error to the Enlightenment stance, and Aquinas was equally free of both excesses. According to the doctrine of the natural law of human reason as a reflection of the eternal law there is indeed good reason to treat the traditions of mankind as normative; there is, that is to say, a presumption in their favor, but no more. For there is also the possibility of questioning, and of science, as itself, *qua* possibility, created by this same human tradition to the extent of being enshrined in any human language.

Peter Geach called upon the Thomistic heritage earlier than did MacIntyre. He was able to show how many of Wittgenstein's prestigious insights recalled Aquinas. Similar claims were pushed by English Dominicans such as Herbert McCabe (for example, in *Law, Love and Language*) and the theologian Fergus Kerr. Now certainly the picture of Aquinas presented by Geach in the book *Three Philosophers* is more assimilable to analytic philosophy than, say, Copleston's or most other studies of him in English. But our interest here would focus upon how far Geach presents a faithful or objective picture. What emerges, after all, is a view of the medieval colossus as not out of harmony with the later, supposedly more sophisticated researches of Frege and the tradition in which Frege stands, at the same time as Frege himself can by this route more easily appear as the continuator of an original *philosophia perennis*.

In fact such a harmonization would, it can be shown, better fit the case of Scotus than Aquinas, since Scotus, like Frege and most Western philosophers, was an essentialist in the sense⁶ that applies even to the existentialists, tending as they did to make an essence out of existence itself. For Aquinas, on the other hand, being (*esse*) was the act of all acts and even of each substantive thing. Act and not essence

is thus the first reality. As additional to essence it makes the difference between possibility and reality.⁷ Geach gives a good account of this but his presentation turns out, all the same, in many instances to be rather a presentation of Scotist views, for example, in the equation of matter with *stuff*, just what Aquinas, in his faithful presentation of the Aristotelian *hypokeimenon*, denied, as can be seen in many texts, for example, *De principiis naturae*. Again, in his stressing that Aquinas did not teach the abstraction of concepts⁸ but rather that the mind *makes* concepts (thus giving us a separate conceptual or linguistic world as in Wittgenstein and Frege, one which will not clash with “the linguistic idiom of our time”⁹) Geach presents us more with a Scotist conceptualism than with a Thomist realism.¹⁰ The object of thought, with its *esse objectivum*, is no longer the thing perceived by the senses. Here Geach ignores Aquinas’s Aristotelian doctrine that there is *nihil in intellectu nisi prius in sensu*, again as if Locke’s use of this adage, which he had attacked in *Mental Acts*, were at one with its authentic content. For Aquinas, in fact, the senses do not themselves understand what they present to the intellect, while on the other hand anything that the mind constructs will not be that which (*id quod*) it perceives, but that through which (*quo*) it unites with or “reaches right up to” the reality (*rem*).¹¹ If we should wish to consider these mental constructions in turn, then we have to treat them as realities in turn (*entia rationis*) and construct new, second-order concepts of them in order to do so, and this of course will be by a new process of abstraction. This process in fact differs little from the case of number, where an abstraction performed upon the original (now generalized) abstraction of quantity from sensible particulars is just what gives us the ability of “going on to the next number,” although Geach in *Mental Acts* offers just this as in itself an alternative explanation to that of abstraction. In fact he simply disdains to explain, as in his ridiculing the abstraction of “nottishness,” a concept formed, according to Aquinas, concurrently with the forming of the fourth transcendental concept (*aliquid* or *aliud quid*, another, not this) abstracted from specifically material reality. Geach may do this if he likes, but he cannot falsify or “tame” Aquinas in order to get traditional support for his own Fregeanism.

Geach claimed,¹² similarly, that for Aquinas predicates do not refer, have no *suppositio*, this being the doctrine of Frege’s “Concept and Object.” This again can be refuted by the texts.¹³ It is clear from this that Geach’s arguments against the “two name” theories of predication apply as much to Aquinas as to Ockham, but Geach wants to deny this.¹⁴ In line with this he quite ignores Aquinas’s deeply metaphysical doctrine of the *copula*, of why just the verb “is,” which “means to *be in act*,” is used, at least implicitly, in any predication whatever (“when we wish to signify that any form or act actually inheres in any subject”).¹⁵ This, the deepest strand, shows why there is no prospect whatever of synthesizing Aquinas with either Frege or Kant.¹⁶

Geach, however, is not and has never claimed to be a pure Thomist. In ethics, for example, he flatly disagrees with Aquinas on the unity of the virtues and discriminatingly calls in question some facets to be found in Aquinas of the application of teleology to human action.¹⁷ Here, though, we are concerned with his apparently faulty presentation of Aquinas’s own views, thus incidentally raising the

substantive question of whether any analytical philosopher could be a Thomist, or share and understand Aquinas's central insights, without going over to Thomism lock, stock and barrel, that is, without abandoning some axioms and parts of the method which define him as "analytical."

Regarding the accurate presentation of St Thomas by and to analytical philosophers one finds that Anthony Kenny is both even less accurate than Geach and more critical of Aquinas, as indeed he is free to be. But they concur in their failure to understand Aquinas on the *quod quid est*, ridiculing the doctrine which they imagine for themselves (*viz.* that the mind naturally grasps the real essence of anything it considers),¹⁸ while they both fail accurately to appreciate the central doctrine of *esse*.

A more literal Thomist in the analytical tradition was Henry Veatch, with his "intentional logic," who, however, fights very shy indeed of St Thomas's theology, this leading him to differ sharply from Aquinas (the difference, again, is not made very explicit) over aspects of human rights and related issues. Many American Thomists cannot be regarded as analytical philosophers. Those who are, such as James Ross or David Burrell, would seem to offer misinformation in their presentation of Thomistic analogy, which (following McInerny) they understand as having been in Aquinas a purely logical doctrine. They would have difficulty in explaining his saying that without analogy all things would be one.¹⁹ The analogy of being is the nerve and vitality of Thomism, the core of its power to shock and arouse.

Many people educated in analytical philosophy take Moore's and Hume's doctrine of the "naturalistic fallacy" (no "ought" from an "is") as axiomatic. We therefore have the strange spectacle of writers in ethics who would be disciples of Aquinas not only presenting a doctrine of the natural law which accepts the naturalistic fallacy as a fallacy, a straight self-contradiction if this is made part of a natural law theory, but even claiming, as if with superior hermeneutic insight, that this contradiction was the doctrine of Aquinas (J. Finnis; Germain Grisez). But for Aquinas, the good was nothing if not being itself, or some being, as grasped by the will. There was no "universe of values."

3. Conclusion

It would take us too far afield to show how "transcendental Thomism" and other exploitations of Aquinas's ideas within the phenomenological movement in fact surrender the basic Thomist theses, as I am claiming has been done when analytical philosophers have referred themselves to Thomism. The basic error seems to lie in viewing Thomism as in the first place a somewhat fragile *synthesis*, itself, of patristic thought with Aristotle's philosophy. This way of viewing things stems in part from an initial posture of biblical positivism, by which, it is assumed, a Christian thinker must be hampered. Aquinas's attitude, however, was rather to take all truth as his by right. Not compromise, but conquest, was his idea.

All the same, St Thomas was able to approve the direction of Aristotelianism, even if he transposed and elevated many of the positions taken. What he could not

approve would be the basic idealism and nominalism behind most academically accepted later philosophy. Thomism cannot be tamed in this way. So we have at least to be open to the possibility that there is *no* fruitful way in which “the two traditions” can be combined in equal strength.

What might this tell us about Thomism? It claims to offer the key to what people have been seeking elsewhere, as Plato and Aristotle, says St Thomas, sought in vain and with *angustia* for the true knowledge of God, an example which returns us to the heart of the problem, the problem of an engagement with the real, supplementary to, but surpassing, the model-theoretic manipulations of natural science.

Notes

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- 1 This is the view which astonished and scandalized almost all his contemporaries, and which is thus the main reason why Western intellectual history has not followed the road of Aquinas.
- 2 Hegel was an exception here. The “unhappy consciousness” is only the negative moment required for the more extended step forward.
- 3 That is, as a result of practical considerations.
- 4 Actually there is little call to regard the circumstance as accidental if one concurs in Maritain’s judgment, when speaking of Aristotle, that “when a task is of extraordinary difficulty both in itself and in the conditions it requires, we may expect that there will be but one workman capable of its accomplishment. Moreover a well-built edifice is usually built not on the plans of several architects, but on the plan of a single one.” Speaking then of “the edifice of human wisdom” (and not of some “explanatory model”) he says that “the foundations must be laid once for all by a single thinker” and he quotes Descartes to the same effect, adding that Descartes was wrong to believe that he was the man thus destined or competent “not only to lay the foundation of science, but to complete the edifice,” as Aristotle had not claimed. *Introduction to Philosophy* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1930; 1991) 51.
- 5 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).
- 6 Cf. Etienne Gilson, *On Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952).
- 7 The ignoring of this has led, beyond Meinong and possible worlds, to Richard Sylvan’s “sistology.”
- 8 An opinion verging on paradox and only explicable by Geach’s mentally reserving to himself an exclusively Lockean sense of “abstraction,” which (of course) was not that taught by Aquinas.
- 9 Cf. P. T. Geach, “Teleological Explanation,” in *Explanation*, S. Korner, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975).
- 10 Of course a conceptualism *malgré lui*, since Scotus sought, with the formal distinction *a pane rei*, to defend an ultra-realism in which everything was just as we thought it. It was left to his successors to see that in that case we don’t need things at all.

- 11 *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2.
- 12 "Subject and Predicate," *Mind* 59 (1950).
- 13 See the Commentary on ch.7 of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. In fact the very text which Geach seemed to have in mind in his article (*ST* I, q. 85, a. 5, ad. 3) is one which shows Aquinas teaching the supposition of the predicate, giving in fact the very *rationale* for this. Geach speaks of an agreement in its reference with the subject of a phrase ("thing that has whiteness") *not* in the sentence itself considered, "Socrates is white." This, in Aquinas's text, is the basis for his theory of the agreement in *suppositio* of the subject and predicate expressions which are in the sentence. This would suggest, incidentally, how different the two notions of reference and *suppositio* are from each other.
- 14 Cf. Henry Veatch, "St Thomas's Doctrine of Subject and Predicate," in *St Thomas Aquinas* (1274–1974), *Commemorative Studies*, Vol. II (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974).
- 15 *In I Periherm.*, lect. 5, n.22.
- 16 Cf. A. de Muralt, "Kant le dernier occamien," *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale* (1975), 32–53.
- 17 Cf. P. T. Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 138–40.
- 18 Cp. Theron, *Philosophy or Dialectic?* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1994), III 4 and IV 1; A. Kenny, *The Five Ways* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 82–95.
- 19 Cp. Theron, *Africa, Philosophy and the Western Tradition* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995), 147.

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Chapter Thirteen

Haldane's Analytic Thomism and Aquinas's *Actus Essendi*

John F. X. Knasas

1. Introduction

In his 1999 Irish Aquinas Lecture entitled “The Spirit of Thomism and the Task of Renewal,” John Haldane continues to advance his oft-made thesis that Catholic philosophers and theologians should embrace the considerable achievements of analytical philosophy.¹ These achievements include: precise propositional analyses, detailed logical argumentation, and dialectical accuracy in questions of knowledge, reality and value. Analytical thinkers have used these achievements to develop the fields of philosophical logic and semantics. If one doubts the potential here, then Haldane says to look at the work of Anscombe, Geach and Dummett. In these respects much of the spirit of Scholastic “Aristotelianism” survives in analytical philosophy. Haldane contends that the view of the analytic tradition as anti-metaphysical, resolutely skeptical and essentially nihilistic, is, in truth, a minority view applicable only to Hume who himself is effectively criticized from within the analytic tradition by the likes of Reid and Wittgenstein.² In conclusion, Haldane proposes an exchange between analytical philosophy and Thomism.³ By offering “intellectual fruits,” analytical philosophy will renew Thomism, while Thomism by offering “spiritual fruits” will help analytical philosophy which does have the fault of not recognizing the goal of philosophy – morality and personal formation. Here Haldane references the call of John Paul II in his 1998 encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*, for a “sapiential dimension of enquiry.”

I assume that Haldane is referring to paragraph 81 in which John Paul writes: “To be consonant with the word of God, philosophy needs first of all to recover its sapiential dimension as a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life.”⁴ But the Pope’s point is not lacking a recognition of intellectual content. The Pope goes on to explain at paragraph 83 that this dimension stipulates “the need for a philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical* range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth.”⁵ Even though precisely at this point the Pope insists that he does “... not mean to speak of metaphysics in the sense of a specific school or a particular historical current of thought,” later on at paragraph 97 he does speak of a specific school. Still, within the requirements for “the *understanding of revealed truth*,” John Paul insists that theology requires a philosophy of being based upon

the very act of being (*philosophia essendi ... quod actu ipso "essendi" sustentatur*).⁶ Affixed to this remark is note 115. The note refers to the Pope's 1979 Angelicum address on the occasion of the centenary of Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. An examination of the Angelicum address makes it unmistakably clear that when the Pope speaks of a metaphysics based on the act of being, he is referring to Aquinas's metaphysics of *esse*.⁷ Even though Thomists have rendered "*esse*" and "*actus essendi*" into English as "the existence of a thing" and so have suggested that *esse* is just the fact of the thing, Aquinas understands *esse* as an *actus* "had" by the individual thing, as an accident is by a substance.⁸ But *esse* is a *sui generis actus* in that it is basic and fundamental to the thing whose *actus* it is.⁹ Accordingly the Pope's Angelicum address cites *QDP*, 3, 7c, in which Aquinas describes *esse* as the "*primus*" and "*intimior*" effect of all of God's effects. It is not so much that Aquinas disagrees with the fact-sense of the thing's existence, rather, it is that he insists that the fact-sense be deepened to include the act in virtue of which the thing is a fact.

What Haldane fails to see in *Fides et Ratio*, therefore, is that you cannot have the "sapiential dimension" without the presence of certain ideas – viz., a metaphysics of being based on the act of being. Here Thomism has not simply a "spiritual fruit" to contribute. The problem is that in analytic discussion of "exists," hardly anyone regards it as a first order predicate for a distinctive attribute of its own. Peter Geach, for example, concludes, "Aquinas's doctrine of *esse* really adds nothing over and above his doctrine of form."¹⁰ More recently but still working in the same Fregean context as Geach, Brian Davies argues that in Aquinas exist (*esse*) "... is to be or to have form."¹¹ Elsewhere I have commented on Davies's position and the reasons for it.¹² Here I would like to focus my discussion on Geach's position.

2. Geach on *Esse*

I have already indicated that Geach's interpretative thesis of *esse*, viz., *esse* really amounts to double-talk for talk about form.¹³ To understand the reasons for Geach's interpretation one must note the counter-interpretation with which he is dealing. The counter-interpretation claims that by *esse* Aquinas means something to do with what is asserted by affirmative answers to the question "*An sit?* Does it exist?" In other words, *esse* means what we mean when we assert "There is ..." According to Geach, Aquinas at one time held the counter-interpretation. But Geach finds three reasons for claiming that Aquinas eventually jettisoned the "There is ..." interpretation. First, a privation like blindness is not a being and has no *esse*.¹⁴ Nevertheless we assert that blindness exists. For instance we say "blindness is in the eye." Hence the existence asserted in this case is quite different from Aquinas's meaning of *esse*. Second, the counter-position would commit us to saying that asserting God to exist is the same as asserting what God is.¹⁵ That is not only ridiculous but also disputed by the texts. Saying "God exists" has nothing to do with apprehending God's *esse*. It has to do with saying that the term "God" is affirmatively predicable. As a supplementary textual reason here, Geach says that

only if "God" is not used as a proper name does it make sense to ask, as Aquinas does, if God is one or many.¹⁶ Third, citing from Aquinas's *Quodl.* q. 2, a. 3, (1256–59), Geach quotes an opponent's objection concluding to two *esses* in Christ. The opponent's argument says that anything about which we can ask if it exists (*An sit?*) has an *esse*. But one can ask if human nature exists. Hence in Christ there are two *esses*, one that belongs to him as human and another that belongs to him as divine. Apparently appealing to his above first reason, Geach summarizes Aquinas reply this way: "this 'there being', he says, has nothing to do with the case, for in the same way we can speak of 'there being' blindness, where there is no *esse* at all."¹⁷

With these arguments presented, Geach confidently concludes that "Aquinas's conception of *esse* thus depends on there being a sense of the verb '*est*' or '*is*' quite other than the 'there is' sense."¹⁸ What is that other sense? As noted, Geach regards *esse* talk as just form talk. Hence to talk about the continued existence of something is really just to talk about the continuous presence of a form in matter.¹⁹ This obviously implies that talk about existence *simpliciter* is just talk about the presence of form in matter *simpliciter*. Accordingly, Geach goes on to quote from Aquinas saying that existence (*esse*) follows form and also that in living things their life, or *vivere*, is their *esse*.²⁰ But life proceeds from form, so again *esse* talk reduces to form talk.

Geach's interpretation certainly sucks the blood from the *esse* doctrine understood as an original contribution to philosophy. And there have been other Thomists who argue similarly.²¹ In their cases a Latin Averroist interpretation of Aquinas is provided without any excuse, though in the Middle Ages a Latin Averroist like Siger of Brabant at least acknowledged that by *esse* Aquinas was trying, though unsuccessfully, to call attention to something new.²² Here I want to defend the idea that Aquinas's conception of *esse* is something novel and should not be taken as just talk about form. I want to do this first by answering Geach's textual arguments and second by defending Aquinas from analytic criticisms of existence as an attribute.

A proponent of the view that *esse* stands for a distinctive *actus* of its own (let me call this proponent an "Existential Thomist") would agree qualifiedly with Geach's disassociation of the "There is ..." sense of existence and Aquinas's sense of *esse*. For Geach they are not the same because *esse* means the form. For the Existential Thomist, they are not the same because *esse* stands for the act in virtue of which the thing, already understood as composed of form and matter, is a fact. In his commentary on Boethius' *De hebdom.* ch. II, Aquinas makes the following analogy. Just as a man is called a runner by having the act of running, so too the man is called a being, or an existent, by having his act of being, or existing. The "There is ..." does not express *esse* but rather the datum in which Aquinas metaphysically analyzes out what he means by *esse*. The philosophical burden for the Existential Thomist will be to show how the mind is prompted by naturally ascertainable data to regard the fact of the thing as dependent upon a deeper *actus* than form. But before attempting to do that, what about Geach's textual reasons to the contrary?

Firstly, is it correct, as Geach's first reason claims, that blindness is not a being and does not have *esse*? No, not in every sense. Geach cites *ST* I, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2m, at which point Aquinas distinguishes between two senses of being (*ens*). Aquinas first says that anything that falls within the ten categories elaborated by Aristotle is a being. But Aquinas also says that in a second sense being signifies the truth of a proposition. In this way, privations are called beings. Geach takes this to mean that anything about which we can talk truly is a being, though it lacks *esse*. But in my opinion Geach misconstrues the focus of Aquinas's remarks. To see why, we have to go back to some earlier texts of Aquinas.

Aquinas makes the same twofold distinction of being back at the very beginning of his earlier work, *De ente* (1252–56).²³ In a second sense, being (*ens*) signifies the "truth of propositions," and so "anything can be called a being if an affirmative proposition can be formed about it, even though it is nothing positive in reality." In works written a little later, Aquinas has some remarks on truth that elucidate what this second meaning of being is and whether or not it involves *esse*. In his *QDV* I, 9c (1256–57), a famous text in Thomistic studies, Aquinas describes the existence of truth in the intellect. He says: "truth follows the operation of the intellect inasmuch as it belongs to the intellect to judge about a thing as it is." Aquinas discussed this doctrine back in article 3. Treating the question of whether truth is only in the composing and dividing intellect, he remarks:

... the nature of truth is first found in the intellect when the intellect begins to possess something proper to itself [*aliquid proprium*], not possessed by the thing outside the soul [*res extra animam*], yet corresponding to it, so that between the two – intellect and thing – an adequation may be found.

Such a moment is the intellect's judgment: "when the intellect begins to judge about the thing it has apprehended, then its judgment [*iudicium*] is something proper to itself – not something found outside in the thing." But the intellect judges "... at the moment when it says that something is or is not." In article 3 (and consequently article 9), Aquinas uses the words "*iudicare*" and "*iudicium*" to designate the intellect's formation of propositions. The second sense of being, viz., the truth of propositions, seems to be talking about cognitional beings, things that exist only in the soul. A remark in Aquinas's *SCG* I, 58, *ampl.* (1259–64) confirms this: "Furthermore, in the case of a proposition formed by a composing and dividing intellect, the composition itself exists in the intellect, not in the thing that is outside the soul [*in ipso intellect existit, non in re quae est extra animam*]."

Does the intellectual presence of the proposition involve *esse*? Evidently. Back in the third chapter of the *De ente* which is devoted to the relation of essence to genus, species and difference, Aquinas says that a nature like humanity has a twofold *esse*. One *esse* is in individual things the other is in the soul. Furthermore, accidents accompany the nature because of either *esse*. One of the accidents that follows *esse in anima* is predictability of the nature and "predication is something achieved by the intellect in its act of combining and dividing."²⁴ These points imply that Aquinas's second sense of *ens*, viz., the truth of the proposition, signifies a

cognitional existent that has its own distinctive type of *esse*. Furthermore, insofar as privations can be talked about through propositions, then, through their presence in propositions, they too would be cognitional beings with their own distinctive type of *esse*. Accordingly, Geach is inaccurate to claim that privations have no *esse* and that the second sense of being has nothing to do with *esse*.

The above conclusion that privations have a type of *esse* is confirmed by a text from another early work, Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* (1252–56). At *In Sent.* II, d. 37, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3m, and again within the context of a twofold sense of *ens*, Aquinas admits that a privation does not have an *esse in re*.²⁵ But insofar as being signifies the truth of a proposition, deformity is said to exist. When Aquinas says that just as from the composition of form to subject or to matter there results a certain accidental or substantial *esse*, so too the intellect signifies the composition of a privation with a subject through a certain *esse* [*per quoddam esse*]. This *esse* is only an *esse* of reason (*esse rationis*) since in the thing there is non-*esse*. Nevertheless, *esse rationis* is sufficiently *esse* to justify saying that insofar as the privation has an *esse* in reason, then the privation is from God who, according to the *responsio* of the article, is the source of *esse*.

Aquinas definitely is not espousing Geach's thesis that privations have no *esse* at all. Privations have no *esse in re* but they possess an *esse in anima*. Thus Geach's first reason against the counter-position disappears.²⁶ In review, Geach claimed that *esse* could not be associated with the object of affirmation because one makes affirmations about blindness and blindness has no *esse*. But one can now see that *esse* is an object of affirmation, even in the case of privations, because the object of an affirmation can be the *esse* had by the privation in the *ens rationis* that is the proposition. Geach's first reason works only by telescoping *esse* into real *esse*. Among Thomists the standard practice has the single term "*esse*" standing for real *esse*, *esse* possessed by things independent of cognition. But the standard practice should not fool a reader, as it has fooled Geach, into thinking that there is only real *esse*. "*Esse*" is a term with a multivalent meaning. "*Esse*" can also stand for cognitional *esse*, and cognitional *esse* can be as much an object of affirmation as real *esse*. (I will follow the standard practice among Thomists unless otherwise noted.)

This reply to Geach's first reason is also applicable to Geach's third reason. As Geach summarizes Aquinas's reply to the objection in behalf of two *esses* in Christ, Geach has Aquinas claiming that to answer the question "*An sit?*" by some assertion "There is ..." does not involve *esse*. The reason is because we can assert "There is blindness" when there is no *esse* at all. But in his own reply Aquinas does not say that the question "*An sit?*" can be answered by an affirmation that has nothing to do with *esse*. Rather, Aquinas replies that the "*An sit?*" question can be answered by an *esse* that consists in an act of the soul. Hence Aquinas says that we are able to ask concerning blindness if it exists: "This objection focuses on the *esse* that consists in the act of the soul, because 'Does it exist?' is also able to be asked concerning blindness." In his *responsio* Aquinas described this *esse* in already familiar terms: "Hence this *esse* is not something in the nature of things, but is only in the act of the soul composing and dividing. And so *esse* is attributed to

everything about which a proposition is able to be formed, whether it is a being or a privation of being. For we do say that blindness exists.”²⁷ Note that unlike Geach, Aquinas does not deny that all questions about existence are questions about *esse*. Rather, Aquinas asserts it and then goes on to distinguish types of *esse*. Hence some questions are about something having real *esse* while others are about something having cognitional *esse*. In the case of the Incarnation, the only creaturely *esse* in Christ’s human nature about which it is appropriate to ask is the *esse* had by Christ’s human nature in our soul when we think about it.²⁸

By employing the above points, an Existential Thomist can finally address Geach’s second reason. As the reader will recall, Geach, citing *ST I*, q. 3, a. 4, ad 3m, maintains that the proposition “God exists” has nothing to do with talk about an *esse* that belongs to God but rather has everything to do with Fregean talk about something having the divine attributes. The transposition of “God exists” into “Something is God” is that about which Aquinas is talking when Aquinas says that we know God’s *esse* in the truth of a proposition. Obviously this still leaves unknown God’s *esse* as it is in itself. Consequently, the objection that since in God *esse* and essence are the same, then knowing one is knowing the other, is answered. But as plausible as Geach’s reading is, it is not the appropriate one. Aquinas is bringing up a second sense of *esse* that signifies the composition of the proposition which the soul makes joining a predicate to a subject. As we have seen, this composition involves an *esse* for the proposition. Hence insofar as we can know the cognitional *esse* of the true proposition about God, then in a sense we can know God’s *esse*. For Aquinas the proposition “God exists” is about God’s *esse*. It is about the *esse* that God has in a true proposition about him. Obviously this reading also leaves intact the other claim that God’s *esse* as it is in itself is unknown. The virtue of my reading is that it stands in line with the Thomistic texts cited in my earlier replies to Geach. So what is going on here is, in my opinion, no Fregean reinterpretation of “God exists” into “Something is God.”

But what about Geach’s noting that for Aquinas “God” is not a proper name but the name for a type of thing such that propositions that employ the term “God” in the subject position can be transposed into those that employ the term in the predicate position? Geach’s reason is that at *ST I*, q. 11, a. 3, Aquinas asks whether God is one or many. Geach says that the question only makes sense if the term “God” is not being used as a proper name. Geach’s observation, in my opinion, amounts to a philosophical red herring. Granting him his reason, the substance of my interpretation of *ST I*, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2m, still stands. For instead of talking about the *esse* that God has in the proposition about him, Aquinas will be speaking of the *esse* that the something that is God has in the proposition about it.²⁹ Geach has not made disappear a concern with *esse* so understood as a distinctive *actus*.

Finally, Geach’s citation of Thomistic thoughts as *esse* follows form and that in living things *esse* is *vivere* avail him nothing. At *SCG II*, 54, a text which depicts *esse* as so much a distinctive *actus* that its composition with the material thing can be compared to the matter/form distinction within the thing, Aquinas explains how we are to understand *esse* following form: “form is said to be a principle of being for this reason: that it is the complement of the substance, whose act is being:

dicitur forma esse principium essendi, quia est complementum substantiae, cuius actus est ipsum *esse*.” *Esse* follows form not because *esse* is just the fact of the thing but because as the very act of the thing it is in a strange sense dependent upon the thing and upon any principles of the thing, for example, the thing’s form. In this case in which the entire metaphysical mission of *actus essendi* is to realize the thing, *esse* is a cause in a sense dependent upon its effect, and so any causes in the constitution of the thing actuated by *esse* are also in a sense causes of the *esse*. Also the texts make it clear that when Aquinas says *esse* is *vivere*, Aquinas is not identifying *esse* with vital operations. Rather, he is using the word “*vivere*” to stand for his metaphysical principle of *esse* when found in living things. For example, “Et secundum hoc, vivere nihil aliud est quam esse in tali natura ... Quandoque tamen vita sumitur minus proprie pro operationibus vitae” (*ST* I, q. 18, a. 2c) and “... vita dicitur dupliciter. Uno modo, ipsum esse viventis ... Alio modo, dicitur vita ipsa operatio viventis” (*ST* I-II, q. 3, a. 2, ad 1m).³⁰

In conclusion, Geach’s contention that in Aquinas *esse*-talk is just double-talk for talk about form and not talk about a further and distinctive *actus*, is textually unverified. Again, for Geach *esse simpliciter* just means the presence of form in matter. But as mentioned above, at *SCG* II, 54, and elsewhere for that matter,³¹ the matter/form composition is so distinct from *esse* that it is compared to *esse* as the potency to which *esse* is the very act. In the case of the *actus essendi*, I would certainly conclude that Thomism has an intellectual fruit to contribute to analytic philosophy.

3. Thomism and the Analytics

But how is a philosopher to offer that Thomistic contribution to the Analytics? A number of approaches exist. First, if Geach is insensitive to Aquinas’s unique *actus* understanding of a thing’s existence, it is not, I think, because of any antipathy intrinsic to Analytic philosophy. Barry Miller in his recent, *The Fullness of Being: A New Paradigm for Existence*, illustrates how an understanding of existence as a property basic and fundamental to the individual thing can be defended amid analytic discussion of “exists.”³² To a Thomist, Miller’s strategy is interesting. The strategy is essentially negative.³³ Miller accepts the view that there are *prima facie* examples of first order predication of “exists” and then proceeds to fight tooth and claw with the parade of Analytic philosophers who say the contrary. Miller’s strategy is valuable both because it summarizes most, if not all, the Analytic discussion about “exists” and because his replies – ingenious of themselves and able to be assimilated by the Thomist – are taken from the resources of Analytic philosophy itself. In my opinion, Miller is doing to Geach the very type of thing that Haldane says Reid and Wittgenstein do to Hume. But one thing that I find Miller failing to do is providing the kind of philosophical analysis that brings the mind to realize that existence is a *sui generis* attribute of the individual thing. As mentioned, Miller just finds this to be the *prima facie* irreducible meaning of some propositions. But that still leaves desirable some presentation of the epistemological background

from which these propositions arise. Here too Thomism has “an intellectual fruit” to offer to Analytic philosophy.³⁴

According to Aquinas, how is the human mind brought to the *actus essendi* understanding of the thing’s existence? In passages from works early in his career, but as far as I can tell never revoked by what he said in later writings, Aquinas presents his doctrine of the *duplex operatio intellectus* as natural reason’s access to *esse*. My summary of this doctrine follows.³⁵

Indicating its recognition by philosophers, the first activity is given a number of names. Aristotle called it the understanding of indivisibles. Among Muslim philosophers, says Aquinas, it was called *formatio* and *fides*. Aquinas says that this first intellectual operation does not grasp the *esse* of the thing, but the thing’s simple quiddity. The procedure that Aquinas has in mind is detailed in the *De ente*, a work from the same period as the texts on the intellect’s twofold operation. There is what is called the absolute consideration of the essence. This consideration, “abstracts from every *esse*: *abstrahit ad quodlibet esse*,” that the essence may have.³⁶ The movement of the intellect’s attention is from some multiple existential instances of the essence. For example, the meaning of “man” existing in reality in Tom, Dick and Harry and in the mind as the specific concept. From this observation Aquinas concludes that, to man as such, neither real existence nor cognitional existence can belong. Hence he says, “I can know, for instance, what a man or a phoenix is and still be ignorant whether it has being in reality.”³⁷

Because of a strong nominalist tradition in British philosophy, Analytic thinkers will already be challenged by what Aquinas calls the absolute consideration of essence. But an honest effort must be made. The following considerations provide some incentive for making that honest effort. Firstly, as an object of intellection the absolutely considered essence transcends the imagination. For example, what we see as common to Tom, Dick and Harry is not the image of a stick figure. Any such image will still be too particular in terms of posture, color, facial expression, and so on, to be the sameness of which we are aware. As so described essence can sound “spooky.” But human awareness is not just of particulars. It also includes awareness of sameness among them. Even inveterate nominalists like Locke and Hume are constantly indulging in this mode of cognition when they claim that *all* sensations are only of ideas and *all* statements of fact are not necessary. Logical positivism’s demise over the claim that *all* meaningful statements are either statements of fact or tautologies also shows the ineluctability of what Aquinas is speaking. As *prima facie* spooky as it may sound to some, intellection is a constant feature of human experience. With its focus on meanings and backgrounds, phenomenology can also be of some help, though in its Husserlian presentation, phenomenology would understand these items to be *a priori* projections of the human subject.

Neither should one criticize Aquinas by making him say too much. In other words, one should not conflate the absolute consideration of essence with knowing the definition of essence and then critique the former by noting that nobody ever agrees on the latter. For Aquinas we can know a sameness long before we know how to define it. For example, according to Aquinas, the notion of being, the *ratio*

entis, was always known to philosophers, though it took centuries to arrive at its basic understanding as “*habens esse*.”³⁸ Disagreement about definition, therefore, does not entail that there is nothing common to define.

Finally, there should be no fear that Aquinas is being swept into a Platonism that accords to essence some ontological status. In other words, how can essence be “considered” without conceding that it is of itself existing? To say otherwise seems to admit the absurdity that we can have nothing as an object of awareness. So if we are aware of essence then essence is something and Aquinas is Platonizing. Evidently Aquinas does not believe, as this difficulty assumes, that every object of awareness is in virtue of an existence proper to the object. With absolute consideration, we have an awareness of essence thanks to the existence of the data from which the consideration begins. It is the existing data that direct and sustain our attention on something that has no existence at all. So to be aware of essence is not to be traveling to a Platonic realm of the forms. That fear also can be placed aside.

But for my purposes what should be noted is that though Aquinas runs through absolute consideration with the meaning of “man” as the example, the same can be done using the individual. Not only is man found in an existential multiplicity, so too is Tom. Tom himself is found really existing and cognitively existing. How do you make this discovery? The method is a reflection upon your current act of external sensation, viz., what you are doing right now as you look this way and listen. What your reflection shows is that your object of awareness is present through itself and not present through an idea or a cognitive likeness. It is true that in other acts of cognition the object is present in and through an idea or cognitive likeness. These other acts include imagination, memory, conceptualization and judging. Scholastics have traditionally referred to the likenesses in these acts as “expressed species.” The respective expressed species in the just mentioned acts are: the image, the memory, the concept and the proposition.³⁹ Reflective acts different from the one of which I am now speaking, grasp these cognitive likenesses.⁴⁰ The present reflection is not upon these likenesses but upon a current act of sensation. Because that reflection notices no likenesses it produces the confidence that I am aware of something truly other than myself. In other words the reflection confirms that the object of sensation is at least real, that is, is existent even if the sensor were rendered blind or deaf. Hence though I could doubt that my object of sensation is human because it could be an android or that it was Tom because it could be an impersonator, I cannot doubt that the object is at least real. In this reflective context, Descartes’s dream and hallucination possibilities have no force.⁴¹

In sum, for Aquinas something real can exist cognitively either directly as in external sensation or indirectly as in and through a cognitive likeness of imagination, conceptualization, and so on. The texts considered earlier when replying to Geach spoke of cognitive existence in the just mentioned second sense. Now it is the first sense that is important. Hence from a reflection upon one’s current sensation, one produces the multiplicity of the really existing thing as juxtaposed to itself cognitively existing. Thanks to the erecting of this multiplicity, a first act of the intellect can commence. Here the intellect picks out the thing itself as the

commonality. Because the real thing is also cognitively existing the real thing cannot be of itself real. Likewise because the thing is also real it cannot be of itself cognitively existing. Of itself the thing must be not existing at all in order to be existing in multiple manners. The attained object is grasped as abstracting from every *esse*, as, one might say, existentially-neutral.

Yet after reaching this point, the intellect does not rest content with an absolutely considered object. There follows the second operation. Aquinas insists that the intellect's second operation grasps the *esse* of the thing. This means that it grasps, for example, the thing's real existence as a distinct *actus* of the thing. Aquinas says that the second operation consists in the composition and division of a proposition. To readers this formula can be confusing. Forming propositions is one thing, grasping the thing's *esse* is something else. For example, one is aware that the proposition "The weather is sunny" can be formed in the midst of a thunder storm. Hence though the second operation may involve, at a subsequent phase, the construction of propositions, it is originally something different from that.⁴² If a penetrative grasp of an existence-neutral commonality in a number of existential instances is characteristic of the intellect's first act, then a reflection back upon the instances in which the commonality was grasped should be characteristic of the second act. In this rebound of the intellect's awareness, the real existence, for example, left out in the intellect's first operation, is recovered. In this way the intellect grasps the real existence as a distinct *actus* or as *esse*. By rebounding to the second instance of the original multiplicity the intellect can also grasp the cognitional *esse* as a distinct *actus* and so come to recognize the ambiguity of *esse*.

It is important to realize here the compositeness of the object of the intellect's second operation. The object is neither the *esse* of the thing nor just the thing. The object is, for example, the thing-with-its-real-*esse*. What external sensation first gave to the intellect as an existing thing is at the term of the twofold operation appearing as a thing *with* existence. To use a photography analogy, the picture has gone from glossy to grainy. What appeared as one, now manifests parts. In other words, in the second act of the intellect the original multiplicity given to the intellect is once again set up but in a far richer fashion. Before the gaze of the intellect is not just a real and cognitional thing but a thing with real and cognitional *esses*.

Finally, the second operation not only reveals a real existent to be a composition of some individual with its real *esse*, the second operation also shows the character of the composition. Here the intellect does not click on the *esse* to the thing just in any manner. Rather, a specific alignment is manifest. In that alignment the *esse* is presented as basic and fundamental to the thing. The two items, specifically, the thing of itself, existence-neutral, and its real existence, are not composed in an equal side-by-side fashion like two books on a shelf, nor are they composed like a subject and its attribute posterior and subsequent to its subject. The very exercise of the intellect's second operation here provides the reason for placing the real existence as basic and fundamental to the thing. Since the reflective rebounding starts from the individual understood as existence-neutral, then one cannot understand the thing to be already there to have the real existence added to the thing

in the manner of a posterior and subsequent attribute. Rather, the thoroughly existential-neutral status of the individual thing offers no ontological resistance to the added real existence. This real existence must be understood as sinking through the peripheries of the thing to occupy, in turn, a position of priority and fundamentality. Like the hole of a donut that is inside the donut by being outside, the second operation places the thing's real existence most intimate to the thing by placing the existence prior and fundamental to the thing. Because *esse* is *profundius*, *esse* is *magis intimum*.

This above use of the second operation is the crucible, the engine, the furnace, so to speak, of the rest of Thomistic metaphysics. The second operation clearly sees that the thing is a being in and through composition with its *actus essendi*, just as in similar fashion a man has the status of a runner in and through composition with his *actus currendi*. But before that thing has its real existence, the thing is existence-neutral, it is actually nothing. The thing has of yet no recognized status in being. The recognition of that status comes through the *esse* grasped in the second operation. Hence, *esse* is no garden variety attribute but *sui generis*.

4. Thomistic Epistemology

It is my opinion that the above epistemology lies behind the positive existential propositions that Miller takes to be *prima facie* about the subject's attribute of existence. Hence this epistemology represents another "intellectual fruit" that Thomism can contribute to Analytic discussion. To further underwrite that opinion I will conclude by attempting to illustrate the resiliency of Aquinas's *esse* conception in the Analytic discussion of "exists." Much of that discussion is devoted to criticisms of the view that "exists" is a predicate of individuals with a distinctive, that is, unresolved, meaning of its own. My list of these criticisms is drawn from Miller's above mentioned, *The Fullness of Meaning*, ch. 2.

A fundamental criticism is drawn from negative existential propositions, for example, "Socrates does not exist." The criticism goes as follows. If "exists" stands for a property, then "exists" is like "red" which also stands for a property. Furthermore, the behavior of the two predicates should be similar. Hence just as the negative proposition "X is not red" translates into the positive "X is some other color," so too "Socrates does not exist" should translate into "Socrates does something other than existing." That result becomes problematic when one realizes that according to the similarity we should be talking about existing subjects in all the propositions. Hence "Socrates does something other than existing" becomes "The existing Socrates does something other than existing." Ontologically speaking that looks absurd, viz., an existent that does not exist. Logically speaking the proposition is a blatant contradiction. Since truth does not generate absurdity or contradiction, then the thesis from which these embarrassments follow, viz., "exists" stands for a property of its own, is not true.⁴³

By my analysis the major premise in this criticism is that predicates that stand for properties can be predicated only of what really exists. Yet for Aquinas the

property for which the predicate “exists” stands is *esse* and *esse* is a *sui generis* property. Unlike the garden variety property that is subsequent and posterior to its subject, *esse* is fundamental and basic. This thinking means that when “exists” is predicated, it is predicated of a subject that is not understood as already really existing. Rather, the subject stands for what had been grasped as of itself existence-neutral. Accordingly, “Socrates exists” translates into “Socrates, of himself existence-neutral, in fact exists.” This radical basicness for *esse* ruins the similarity that drives the first criticism. In Aquinas’s philosophy not only are positive existential propositions unlike positive attributive propositions, for example, “X is red,” negative existential propositions do not mimic negative attribute propositions. Since “exists” stands for *esse* – the fundamental *actus* apart from which the subject is simply existence-neutral – then negative existential propositions are not talking about the subject doing something other than existing just as the “not red” object is being some other color. Only a property subsequent and posterior to its subject admits the possibility of replacement by another like property. For the Thomist the negative existential proposition is simply saying that in fact the subject, of itself existence-neutral, has no *esse*. Unlike a negative attributive proposition, a negative existential proposition cannot be predicating a non-existential property as basic and fundamental *esse* does not allow another property to replace it as the property red allows replacement by the property blue. In other words, in Thomism negative existential propositions are resistant to translation into some positive proposition.⁴⁴ One can do it but only with care, for example, “Socrates, of himself existence-neutral, is in fact doing something other than existing.” The predicate here actually refers to Socrates’ staying existence-neutral.

It is true that for Aquinas predication is a logical phenomenon that requires that the subject of predication cognitively exist in the concept, the *ens rationis*, about it.⁴⁵ As so present the subject can undergo the predicative relation of identity with the meaning of the predicate. But this logical requirement makes no commitment to the real status of the subject itself. The subject that is cognitively existing in the concept about it can be some previously absolutely considered existence-neutral individual.

A second fundamental criticism is one that Miller attributes to Michael Dummett. If “exists” expresses a property, then we could speak of something losing and acquiring its existence. But actually such talk is nonsense. For example, when I lose my tan, I am around subsequent to losing it. But when my existence goes, I go also.⁴⁶ There are no properties *tout court*. Even beauty is a property only if it is regarded as something had at a certain stage of one’s life. In reply, I believe Aquinas would say that this objection pays insufficient attention to the way in which *esse* is apprehended by the second operation. That operation adds *esse* to what can either really or cognitively exist because that thing is of itself existence-neutral. So *esse* comes across as an accident just as the tan comes across as an accident in respect to an individual of itself complexion neutral. But the respective status of the subjects here rebounds to the status of the respective accidents. As existence-neutral the subject for *esse* entails that *esse* is a basic and fundamental accident. This scenario allows one to speak, as in fact we actually do, of something

losing or acquiring its existence but not to take that talk as meaning that the thing exists before or after. Appreciated as a *sui generis* property, *esse* generates the appropriate qualifications in talk about it.

In the wake of these perceived problems, Analytics try to formulate other parsings of singular existential statements. Yet from a Thomistic point of view, none of these are required. Still drawing upon Miller's summary, I would like to show this superfluity.

Following Frege, C. J. F. Williams understands a proposition like "Socrates exists" as referring, not to Socrates, but to the name "Socrates." Hence the meaning here is that "Socrates" is a name used of some real individual.⁴⁷ For Aquinas, however, "Socrates" refers to an individual that is of itself existence-neutral. Aquinas does not assume that the individual is of itself an existent.⁴⁸ What prevents Aquinas from making that assumption is his analysis of the individual both really and cognitively existing. For the individual to be doing both, the individual must not have proper to itself any existence. Rather, proper to the individual itself is existence-neutrality. Hence it is perfectly appropriate to formulate existential propositions that have singular things as their subjects and that express whether in fact the individual has existence or not.⁴⁹

Another move concedes that "Socrates exists" is not about the name "Socrates" but about the instantiation of a property unique to Socrates.⁵⁰ Hence "Socrates exists" translates into "There is an individual that has a unique property." This property could be "teacher of Plato," as Russell says, or it could be "socratizes," as Quine says. But again, in Aquinas's view, the individual is existence-neutral and this holds true even if one adds that the individual is unique. It may be true that an existent is unique. But for Aquinas the converse fails. The unique need not be the existent. The unique could be the existence-neutral. This thinking leaves the logical room for "exists" to add a distinctive property of its own.⁵¹

Aquinas can, in consequence, go on to defuse that claim that "Socrates exists" means "Socrates has some other property." Jonathan Barnes, for instance, attempts to translate "exists" into the copula plus the indefinite locative. Hence "Socrates exists" translates into "Socrates is in some place."⁵² But though it may well be that initially to exist involves being in a place, the converse again does not hold. To be spatial does not mean to be existent. The reason is that the individual that is of itself existence-neutral can be a spatial individual.⁵³ The same inability of conversion holds with any other property one may want to consider, for example, Socrates with a definite weight, complexion or gait. Socrates may need to exist with one of these definites but the point is that Socrates with one of these definites does not have to exist. Hence Williams's claim that existence statements are statements about number also collapses.⁵⁴ Number can be added to what is existence-neutral without changing that status. For Aquinas, to be numbered does not necessarily mean to be existent.

Finally, some try to analyze "exists" to be an excluder.⁵⁵ Hence just as "X is a barbarian" means "X has no manners," that is, precisely lacks a property, so too "X exists" means "X is not non-existent." This claim appears to be very similar to Kant's claim that existence adds nothing to the possible; it is simply the possible

realized. Aquinas can do justice to these observations while still holding on to his unique conception of *esse*. As the act of the individual with all of its determinations, *esse* adds but without adding further determination. Revealed in the intellect's second operation as the act of forms, *esse* is the act of determination without itself being a determination. So for Aquinas the existent is the possible realized but not just that. The realized possible involves the *actus* in virtue of which the possible is real. Because we do not notice any further determination, we can think that the actual involves no more than the possible and that "exists" functions as an excluder. But attention to the intellect's twofold operation clearly reveals actuality as involving the addition of *esse*.⁵⁶

Admittedly I have not covered all Analytic criticisms of the thesis that "exists" stands for an attribute of its own. But even if the coverage had been exhaustive, the critique has long been a genie out of the bottle and will undoubtedly morph into other forms. I have tried only to say enough to show the reader that Aquinas's conception of *esse* as a unique *actus* of the thing has the "legs" to keep up with the on-going discussion.

5. Concluding Thoughts

In another place, Haldane expresses his confidence that if Aquinas were to come back today he would come back as an Analytic philosopher. Certainly, says Haldane, Aquinas would not come back as a Neo-Thomist.⁵⁷ This damning criticism of the philosophical worth of the twentieth-century Thomist revival, has, I am sure, an interesting sociology behind it. But held up to a philosophical measure, it is, alas, woefully ignorant of Aquinas's "metaphysics of being based upon the act of being" whose discovery by Neo-Thomists has shown that the twentieth-century Thomist revival has not been in vain. Without an accommodation of this "intellectual fruit," Analytic Thomism is, I fear, as oxymoronic as Transcendental Thomism which tries to graft Aquinas's realist metaphysics onto a Kantian epistemology. Fortunately for Analytic Thomism, someone like Barry Miller, without intending to do so, shows that Analytic discussion of "exists" is not impervious to Aquinas's notion of *actus essendi*. If Analytic Thomism wants to preserve its Thomistic credentials, it must show itself more able than it has hitherto been, of according a place to this most profound insight of Aquinas's metaphysical thought.

Notes

- 1 John Haldane's Aquinas Lecture is in *Thomas Aquinas: Approaches to Truth*, James McEvoy and Michael Dunne, eds. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 66–76. See also Haldane's "What Future Has Catholic Philosophy?" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 71 (1997), 79–90, and his "Holding Fast to What is Good: A Reply to Adriaan T. Peperzak," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 73 (1999), 497–502.

- 2 Haldane, "The Spirit of Thomism," 69.
- 3 Haldane, "The Spirit of Thomism," 79.
- 4 John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, in *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, J. Michael Miller, ed. (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2001), 898.
- 5 *Fides et Ratio*, 899.
- 6 *Fides et Ratio*, 907.
- 7 See my "Fides et Ratio and the Twentieth Century Thomistic Revival," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000), 400–408.
- 8 For the texts here that span Aquinas's theological career see my *Being and Some Twentieth Century Thomists* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2003), 175, 175 n. 4. A being or an existent is a "*quasi habens esse*: as if a possessor of the act of existing." Moreover, at *SCG* II, 54, the possessor is somehow viewed as the matter/form composite, that is, the individual sensible thing itself. *Esse* is also compared to white and running, both of which are accidents.
- 9 Using "being" for the thing's existence, here is how one Neo-Thomist metaphysician explains the relation of *esse* to the thing: "The notion that there is an accident prior to substance in sensible things is repellent to the ingrained human way of thinking. Yet the effort has to be made for the metaphysical understanding of existence. Not substance, but an accident, being, is absolutely basic in sensible things. This has to be understood, however, in a way that does not make being function as the substance. Strictly, it is not the being that is there, but the substance that has the being. The nature cannot take on an adverbial relation to its being. Man cannot be regarded as basically a certain portion of being that exists humanly, or a horse as another portion of being that exists equinely. The man and the horse are not portions of being, but substances that have being. They, and not their being, have to be expressed substantively, even though their being is prior to their natures. Not the subject, but the predicate is absolutely basic." Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Houston, Tex.: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 75. For the texts in which *esse* is called "*prius*," "*primus*," "*profundius*" and "*magis intimum*," see Knasas, *Being and Some*, 178, nn. 8–10.

The priority of *actus essendi* to the thing that it actuates seems to explain Aquinas's earlier mentioned qualification in describing the *ratio entis* as *quasi habens esse*. Usually what is possessed by a thing is regarded as subsequent and posterior to the thing. For example, if I have a tan I have an item distinct from me yet posterior and subsequent to me. We come to understand the tan as distinct and posterior because I can be found without it. This manner of verification obviously fails for *esse*. Without the *esse* I am not found at all. So if we can cogently come to distinguish *esse* from the thing we should not be surprised to find that *esse* is an act of the thing that does not fit the familiar parameters of an act of the thing. To see Aquinas stretching the notion of accident for *esse*, see Knasas, *Being and Some*, 179, n. 12.

Priority also enables one to understand how being (*ens*) can be essentially predicated on the basis of *esse*. Predication on the basis of an act distinct from a thing is usually an accidental, not essential, predication. But the radical priority of *esse* not only distinguishes *esse* from the thing, but, in its own manner, the priority places *esse* in the thing. As *prius*, *esse* is *magis intimum*. Somewhat similarly, by its central location, the hole of the donut is not just outside but also inside the donut. Hence predication on the basis of *esse* is not simply accidental but also essential.

- 10 Peter Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 92.
- 11 Brian Davies, "Aquinas, God, and Being," *The Monist* 80 (1997), 511. For comments

- on Davies's article, see Brian Shanley, "Analytic Thomism," *The Thomist* 63 (1999), 125–37.
- 12 Knasas, *Being and Some*, 202–207.
 - 13 In line with his interpretation Geach understands Aquinas's doctrine of a real distinction between individualized form and *esse* as a distinction between form and its disposition. For example, the real distinction can refer to an individualized form fluctuating through various degrees (Geach, *Three Philosophers*, 94), or to an individualized form realized in one individual rather than many as an individualized animality is realized in two kidneys of a given animal (94), or to an individualized form occurring in two different manners, for example, physically or intentionally (95). In the third case Geach does not describe in what the two different manners of occurrence consists. But that the intentional manner of occurrence involves more than Aristotle's remark of "reception of form without matter," see my *Being and Some*, 199–200.
 - 14 Geach, *Three Philosophers*, 88; also Geach, *God and Soul* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 57.
 - 15 Geach, *Three Philosophers*, 89; Geach, *God and Soul*, 57.
 - 16 Geach, *God and Soul*, 57.
 - 17 Geach, *Three Philosophers*, 90.
 - 18 Geach, *Three Philosophers*, 90.
 - 19 "The continued existence of Tibbles consists in there being this individualized life in a continuously changing parcel of matter." Geach, *Three Philosophers*, 83. Also at 91: "Similarly, there is no such thing as a thing's *just* going on existing; when we speak of this, we must always really be referring to some form or nature, X, such that for that thing to go on existing is for it to go on being X."
 - 20 Geach, *God and the Soul*, 59–60.
 - 21 "With respect to material things, *existence* means the actual composition of the components of the essence. 'Man exists' means that the substantial form and prime matter are *actually* composed. This actuality is not another essential principle; it is not a *tertium quid* composed of the principles. It is the *actual* composition of the essential principles, the actuality of that which is a man." Ralph M. McInerny, *Being and Predication* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 212. Also, "... but for the act which is form actually to be in matter is an act other than the act the form is. This absolutely fundamental actuality is what Thomas means by *esse*...." Ralph M. McInerny, *A History of Western Philosophy* vol. II (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 328.
 - 22 "Sed dicere quod esse sit aliquid additum essentiae rei, ita quod non sit res ipsa neque pars essentiae, ut materia vel forma, et dicere quod non sit accidens, est ponere quartam naturam in entibus." Siger of Brabant from a portion of his *Questions on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* in Armand Maurer, "Esse and Essentia in the Metaphysics of Siger of Brabant," *Mediaeval Studies* 8 (1946), 71.
 - 23 Anthony Kenny makes the same point in order to dispute Geach's claim of a change of mind in Aquinas. See his *The Five Ways: St. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969), 83.
 - 24 Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, Armand Maurer, ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies: 1968), 49.
 - 25 *In Sent.* II "... ens dicitur dupliciter. Uno modo quod significat essentiam rei extra animam existentis, et hoc modo non potest dici ens deformitas peccati, quae privatio quaedam est; privationes enim essentiam non habent in rerum natura. Alio modo secundum quod significat veritatem propositionis, et sic deformitas dicitur esse, non

propter hoc quod in re esse habeat, sed quia intellectus componit privationem cum subjecto, sicut formam quamdam. Unde sicut ex compositione formae ad subjectum vel ad materiam, relinquitur quoddam esse substantiale vel accidentale, ita etiam intellectus compositionem privationis cum subjecto per quoddam esse significant. Sed hoc esse non est nisi esse rationis, cum in re potius sit non esse, et secundum hoc quod in ratione esse habet, constat quod a Deo est.” See *Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, II, Pierre Mandonnet, ed. (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929), 947.

- 26 It is doubtful that Aquinas ever claimed, as Geach seems to presuppose that every assertion expresses *esse*, or real, that is, non-mind dependent, existence. For example, Armand Maurer, “St. Thomas and Eternal Truths,” *Mediaeval Studies* 32 (1970), 91–107, shows that the “is” in “eternal” truths corresponds to no *esse* proper to the truth itself. For Aquinas, just as essences considered in themselves abstract from every being, so too do truths when considered in themselves. Using terminology taken from John of St Thomas, Maurer says (101) that at best these truths can be said to have a “negative” eternity in that in themselves they abstract from any subject in and through which they can come and go. As so entertained, the truth is not being envisaged with any existence at all. Nevertheless the texts that Geach brings up require that I respond along the lines presented above.
- 27 My translation. The Latin is: “Unde hoc esse non est aliquid in rerum natura, sed tantum in actu animae componentis et dividensis. Et sic esse attribuitur omni ei de quo potest propositio formari, sive sit ens, sive privatio entis; dicimus enim caecitatem esse.” *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, Spiazzi, ed. (Rome: Marietti, 1949), 180–81.
- 28 Aquinas sometimes gets at the *ens rationis* that is the proposition by talking about what answers the question “*An sit?*” See *ST I*, q. 48, a. 2, ad 2m.
- 29 Kenny, *Five Ways*, 84, however, correctly notes that at *ST I*, q. 2, a. 1c, “Deus est” is “consistently treated as a subject-predicate one.”
- 30 For other texts and commentary see Joseph Owens, “The Accidental and Essential Character of Being in the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas,” in *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Existence of God: the Collected Papers of Joseph Owens*, John R. Catan, ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1980), 243–44, n. 22.
- 31 See note 8.
- 32 Barry Miller, *The Fullness of Being: A New Paradigm for Existence* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).
- 33 Miller, *Fullness of Being*, 23.
- 34 Miller, *Fullness of Being*, 67–68, argues the primacy of logical analysis. His reason seems to be that without knowing first the linguistic categories we would not know how to express the ontological ones. This reason sounds a bit artificial since ontological analysis could place us on the very level at which language is formed. On this Aristotelian approach see Joseph Owens, *Cognition: An Epistemological Inquiry* (Houston, Tex.: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1992), 321–27. See also Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 86, a. 1c: “And thus [the intellect] forms the proposition *Socrates is a man*.”
- 35 For the texts and my full-length elaboration, see my *Being and Some*, 182–96. See also my “*Esse* as the Target of Judgment in Aquinas and Rahner,” *The Thomist* 51 (1987), 222–45.
- 36 Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 47.
- 37 Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, 55.
- 38 Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 44, a. 2c.

- 39 On expressed species see Owens, *Cognition*, 59 and 124–27. On a discussion of the difference between the Scholastic idea of expressed species, and the Cartesian idea, see Knasas, “Yves R. Simon and the Neo-Thomist Tradition in Epistemology,” in *Acquaintance with the Absolute: The Philosophy of Yves R. Simon, Essays and Bibliography*, Anthony O. Simon, ed. (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1998), 91–92.
- 40 “But since the intellect reflects upon itself, by such reflection it understands both its own act of understanding, and the species by which it understands.” Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2c, *The Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Anton Pegis ed. (New York, NY: Random House, 1945) I, 817.
- 41 See Knasas, “Aquinas’s Metaphysics and Descartes’ Methodic Doubt,” *The Thomist* 64 (2000), 449–72.
- 42 Joseph Owens, “Judgment and Truth in Aquinas,” *St. Thomas Aquinas and the Existence of God*, Catan, ed., 47, takes great pains to distinguish the intellect’s judgmental grasp of existence from the forming of propositions. See also Joseph Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence* (Houston, Tex.: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 22, 24. In “The Range of Existence,” *Proceedings of the Seventh Inter-American Congress of Philosophy*, vol. 1. (Québec: Les Presses de L’Université Laval, 1967), 55, n. 21, Owens effectively uses this distinction to answer Geach’s objection to the Hume-Brentano-Gilson thesis that the act of judgment mirrors existence.
- 43 C. J. F. Williams, *Being, Identity, and Truth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 5–6. A more classic formulation is A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1952), 42–43. For a Thomistic reply to Ayer, see my *Being and Some*, 202–203.
- 44 In *Fullness of Being*, Miller observes that this first problem results from confusing a name’s reference with its bearer (32) and by thinking that nonexistence is more than a Cambridge property (33–37). Also in replying to a similar problem from Dummett, Miller renders talk about non-existents to be non-contradictory in virtue of first and second order uses of “exists” (46).
- 45 As noted above at note 23.
- 46 Michael Dummett, *Frege, Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 387.
- 47 Williams, *Being, Identity, and Truth*, 34.
- 48 D. F. Pears, in Pears and J. F. Thomson, *Is Existence a Predicate?* (London: Aquin Press, 1963), 4, and Williams, *Being, Identity and Truth*, 6, think that some existential propositions can be so constructed that the subject alone referentially implies existence, for example, “This room exists,” and so these propositions are tautologies. The only way to avoid tautology, according to Pears, is to have the subject referring to an existence different from the existence asserted by *exists*. If what I have said is accurate, Aquinas would claim that the use of the demonstrative pronoun does not imply some kind of actual existence for the subject. The pronoun continues to qualify a room of itself existence-neutral. Hence in terms of his epistemology, the full meaning of the proposition is “This of itself existence neutral room exists.” Aquinas could give the same treatment to “I exist.” These treatments clear the way to regard *exists* as expressing the addition of the *sui generis* attribute of *actus essendi*.
- 49 Miller, *Fullness of Being*, 28, answers that “Socrates exists” can be understood as embedded in “Socrates no longer exists,” and since the latter is not about the name but the person, then so too must be the former.
- 50 Williams, *Being, Identity, and Truth*, 34–35.

- 51 To handle this move, Miller, *Fullness of Being*, 41 cites Kripke that names are rigid designators and cannot be reduced to definite descriptions. Miller (41–42) also makes a distinction between “precise” individuals and “precisely” one individual. “Exactly one thing is the teacher of Plato” is about precisely one individual but not about the precise individual that is Socrates.
- 52 Jonathan Barnes, *The Ontological Argument* (London: St Martin’s Press, 1972), 62–65.
- 53 Miller, *Fullness of Being*, 49, replies instead that “all material entities are individual, but not all concrete individuals need be material.” In my opinion, that is too much to claim at the beginning of metaphysics.
- 54 Williams, *Being, Identity, and Truth*, 9–11.
- 55 For example, Roland Hall, as described by Miller, *Fullness of Being*, 50–53.
- 56 Miller, *Fullness of Being*, 52, replies that “exists” cannot be an excluder because there is nothing for it to exclude.
- 57 “[I]f St. Thomas were alive today he would be an analytical philosopher, whether he would have been a ‘neo-Thomist’ is another matter!” Haldane, “What Future Has Catholic Philosophy?,” 81.

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Chapter Fourteen

God and Persons

Hayden Ramsay

1. God is Like Persons

Our thinking about persons owes much to ancient and medieval debates – debates that often do not mention “person” but may be about happiness, practical deliberation, freedom, substance, Jesus Christ, the Trinity. On Boethius’ famous definition (“a person is an individual substance of a rational nature”¹), which Aquinas approved:² persons are individuals (not classes, aggregates or universals); substances (not relations, properties or abstract ideas); instances of a natural kind (not social constructions, legal fictions or philosophical categories); and distinguished by rationality (not sentience, activated intelligence or developmental stage). To this medieval legacy our modern concept of person adds various notions derived from the moral thought of thinkers such as Rousseau and Kant. Persons are not objects: they have a unique form of value (“dignity”); they cannot serve purely as means to other people’s plans; their exercise of choice is self-making and self-ruling (they have “autonomy”); they are to be treated as of equal status, and offered any necessary help or protection (shown “respect”). These are the essentials of the view of persons to which radical philosophers today often respond, sometimes agreeing but often exaggerating one element at the cost of the others. This view is also closer than any other academic view of popular thinking on persons, though the radical attack is undoubtedly affecting popular perceptions.

God is like persons. First, God is a Trinity, or a “Trinity of Persons.” “Three persons, one substance” captures something of the “three *hypostases*, one *ousia*” with which fourth-century Church Fathers settled the meaning of New Testament remarks about the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit and their relations to God the Father. Aquinas famously believed we cannot positively demonstrate the Trinity philosophically:³ philosophers must be content with showing that the idea is not contradictory. But though philosophy cannot prove the Trinity, there is still much here about which to philosophize, in particular the idea of persons.

In what sense are these three “persons” in God? Not in the popular sense in which you and I are persons: that would be an incoherent thought or a return to polytheism. Augustine thought that Father, Son and Holy Spirit were not metaphysically distinct individuals but differentiated relations composing the divine substance: “Persons are mentioned less to say something than to avoid saying nothing.”⁴ This leads to the thought that talk of God as three persons

is a pious custom but does not necessarily go to the heart of the Trinitarian God or the life of God. As the late Herbert McCabe wrote in a recent commentary,

... as speedily emerges [in the *Summa*], the ‘persons’ of the Trinity are not individuals, not substances, not rational and do not *have* natures. What Aquinas labours to show is that in this unique case ‘person’ can mean relation.⁵

If Augustine and Aquinas are right, then just how is God like persons? God is like persons because God is his relationships. To speak of the inner relationships of the divine life is of course to speak of something different from human relationships, and the way in which human persons are constituted by their relationships is different from the way in which God is in his relationships. Nevertheless, personal relationships are no more incidental to God’s life than they are to ours. They are essential to us and to God. Hence, God is like persons.

There is more to be said about the inner life of God than personal relationships; but what there is to say is hard to think and harder still to say. We can only conceive of God in negative terms. Of course, we know all sorts of positive attributes that apply to God – statements that are true of him – but what attribution of these means in the case of God – what “the truth” about God is – is quite mysterious (at least to us, at least now). Similarly, I suggest we can conceive of persons only negatively. Persons are those creatures against which we may never act, those we may never use purely as means to fulfilling our plans and projects.⁶ Persons are the natural limits to our wills, as God is the natural limit to our intellects. Kant, who did most to clarify this view of persons, expressed it by saying that persons are subjects of the moral law.⁷ What this means is that persons are outside the causal nexus; they are not subjects of causality (however interested in and influenced by causality), and so are not explicable in any terms other than those internal to personhood. And, just as with God, when we do use positive and appropriate terms to understand persons (free, rational, subject, ends ...), our attribution is mysterious. At least to us, at least now, the meaning of persons is opaque: partly because persons are not things (though in a different sense from that in which God is not a thing), and partly because reflecting on persons will eventually always involve a degree of self-reflection and so logical and psychological confusion or mystery.⁸

For Kant, when we try to explain human persons, and in particular their free existence, we attempt to bring them within causation, which is to falsify them, losing our grip on the entity we want to explain.⁹ God, of course, is also outside the causal nexus. He is not a thing, but the reason why anything exists rather than nothing at all. God is an uncaused Cause, or more adequately, the Creator. Thus attempting to explain the Creator God in terms of any created thing, any thing we know, is thinking illogically. God, like persons, can be conceived of only negatively.

Furthermore, the only authentic activities for persons are activities which have as their terminus persons (self or others) and their fulfillment. Persons do, of course, live in and cooperate with the natural world, but they cannot choose for the sake of an impersonal object – but only for that object as it serves human ends and

fulfillment. God too is active only in “divinizing,” in sharing his divinity. He cannot share it with anything less than God, any mere creature, unless by divine adoption he raises that creature to be one like himself. He shares divinity with his equal, with God (“the Son”), and this sharing has a vitality (“the Holy Spirit”) that can summon creatures within it, making them lovable, more than mere creatures, open to divinity.¹⁰ Thus God is like persons because his Trinitarian life, like persons’ lives, can only be shared with an equal. God’s natural goal is God, a human person’s natural goal is a person. Neither God nor persons can love cold nature; all love is either theocentric or anthropocentric.

Another reason for saying God is like persons is that God takes an interest in persons, he is personal – personal enough to become human and to die a wretched, human death for us. This idea of a personal God is often sentimentalized: God watches, rather fussily, over our fates, like a worried parent who feels heartache for his children when things go badly for them. But God cannot spectate our suffering: he is no part of the world – and there is no other world in which he dwells and from which he can watch. Of course he could not watch in any case, since there is no passivity in God.

God’s personal interest in us is two-fold. Firstly, creation means that God is entirely responsible for everything that happens, including all of our acts. This doctrine of secondary causation¹¹ is entailed by the radical idea of creation. God is at the heart of (better: God is the heart of) every person: not a claimant for control over persons, but the real creative explanation of the control persons have over themselves. Thus God is more personally involved in our triumphs and falls, our pleasures and passions, than any person (self or other) could be. He is eternally interested in all that happens to us, as his God-won creatures; not creatures like mice, but sons and daughters of God, and brothers and sisters of his Son. Secondly, the Incarnate Second Person of the Trinity is both divine and human. Thus when Jesus had pity on his people, God the Son had pity. So God is personally interested in us, since God the Son lived with us, died for us, and invites us to heaven.

So God is like persons because, like persons, he can only be grasped relationally; and just as persons can only act for what is personal, so God can only act for God. Also, God has a personal interest in his creatures: as Creator, he is intimate with them in a way they cannot even be with themselves; and as Redeemer, God suffers with and for his people. Indeed, God in Jesus Christ suffers more than we do, since he is “like us in all things but sin” and whereas our experiences of suffering and joy are confused and limited, Jesus experiences suffering and joy with the intensity that comes from full knowledge of the truth and total love of the good.

2. God is Not Like Persons

In a recent book on the divine attributes, philosophers of religion Joshua Hoffmann and Gary Rosenkrantz announce charitably, though perhaps with unconscious humor that the concept of God is not incoherent – so long, that is, as we omit such troublesome attributes as omnipresence, eternity, immutability¹² This respected

work of analytical metaphysics is no doubt a fine contribution to analytical metaphysics. But its attempt to apply logical rigor to classic philosophical distinctions and arguments about God time and again misses the point. The point is that attributing properties like immutability and omnipresence to God is not explaining what he is like but, rather, is trying to show how different he is from us, from things of space and time. Even the activity of attributing to God is, if rational, an attempt to show how unlike a subject of attributes – something that can be comprehended and discussed – God is. Even the positive moral attributes first learned in talking about each other and then applied to God – just, merciful, compassionate, loving, and so on – do not reveal to us God's goodness, but just wrap it up with our best language of humility and awe, the same language used by those who encountered and allowed themselves to be transformed by Jesus. Thus God is not like persons. But then what does it actually mean when we say of him that he is simple or all-powerful or all-benevolent?

There is no diversity in God; he has no parts (dimensions, aspects, fields ...). Does this mean that the several divine attributes do not indicate differences in God but are, in effect, synonyms?¹³ That when we think of God as good, wise and powerful, we reveal more about the differentiating way in which our minds (must) work than we do about God? Aquinas is clear that use of the divine attributes is making claims about how God is, not just revealing how we understand God to be.¹⁴ Thus the distinctions we suggest can and do capture some different truths about God; the divine attributes are not just explained by our minds. However, what *is* just explained by our minds is the making of distinctions at all. We make distinctions because only thus can we know; and some of these distinctions do genuinely represent God. Of course they represent him imperfectly: not because God does not have these *particular* qualities, but because the divine essence has no qualities.¹⁵ We can only think of God by thinking through God, thus our thoughts about him are limited. Still, the divine attributes are an accurate way of identifying and worshipping God, so long as we recall his unlikeness to us and *our* goodness, power and so on.

But if God is so completely unlike us, why, when we make distinctions about God, do we make these particular distinctions, the familiar human ones? Do we speak of his power, goodness, and so on, simply because these are the most important distinctions humans know and use of themselves and so, we think, our best means of honoring God? Rather, I think the reason certain attributes matter to humans is because they are ways of our sharing in God's life. God is the explanation of power, goodness, mercy, knowledge and every other positive quality, every attribute we value. Wherever there is goodness, creatures are sharing in God according to their nature; power is their potential to initiate change by participating in God's creative act; knowledge is reflecting something of divine truth, and so on. We do not call God powerful just because power matters to us (or just because he is a power-God). We call him powerful because power matters to us as one of the ways we can share in God. Of course part of God's power is choosing to share power with us: without divesting himself of any of his total power, God chooses not to be a power-God but a power-sharing God, whose creatures are not

craven suppliants but *via* their creative acts are God's children, Christ's siblings and temples of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, in calling God powerful, wise, all-knowing, immutable, and so on, we also recognize that in possessing these, not as distinct qualities but as their ground and uncaused Cause, God has more in common with creatures deficient in these distinct qualities than creatures with a share of them. God stands with the powerless, foolish, ignorant, with those subject to assault and change, those lacking love. This is part of the meaning and on-going benefit of the Incarnation – that God who sustains the Universe is also a young man, and was a powerless baby, and so knows the universal human experiences of vulnerability and temptation at first hand. A beautiful passage near the beginning of Augustine's *Confessions* expresses this unique reconciliation of complexity and simplicity that is God:

You are most high, excellent, most powerful, omnipotent, supremely merciful and supremely just, most hidden yet intimately present, infinitely beautiful and infinitely strong, steadfast yet elusive, unchanging yourself though you control the change in all things, never new, never old, renewing all things yet wearing down the proud though they know it not; ever active, ever at rest, gathering while knowing no need, seeking although you lack nothing.¹⁶

God is not like us, because he is the Creator. Believers in God have no particular explanation to offer of how the Universe came about; they are as free to ponder cosmology and astrophysics as the next person. They are, however, committed to believing in the radical incompleteness of cosmology and astrophysics. The Universe's history does not explain why the Universe exists. Such an explanation is wrapped around in mystery, since it is not for any person to explain it. But if we can ask the question, we must ponder the answer and, bewildering though it is, that answer "all men call God."

Creation means that dependence on God is total; he, meanwhile, is independent. Again, he could not be more unlike us. We depend on him totally, and on other creatures to a great extent. But God depends on no one. His transcendence of nature means he is totally other than the atoms that are totally dependent on him. Thus his causality is to bring them to act not in his way (as if the "way" of God could find any home in the life-story of a creature!) but in their way, the way most perfectly expressive of their natures as created by him. Hence all we most prize – our freedom, our power, our goodness, our relations, our hopes – is that part of the handiwork of God that appears most truly *ours*; but which does so because God here grants us some share in the independence from other creatures that is most truly *his*.

Finally, because God is not like persons he can bring about their Redemption. It is God's profound dissimilarity to persons that means he can redeem them, save them from themselves, restore them to the divine image. If the Incarnation had meant abandoning the divine nature, Christ would have been just another victim of a squalid regime. But because God is God, transcendent of creation and of persons, he can act to save persons from the harm they cause and the harm they inherit.

God's unlikeness to persons is not our alienation from him but our Redemption by him.

3. Persons are Like God

A Christian has the burden of believing persons are *imago Dei*, created in God's likeness. This idea accounts for all that is most important about persons. We have minds. The minds are embodied, so learning is piecemeal and choices provisional. Nevertheless, we do make genuine choices and form intellectual judgments; therefore we are bound to observe principles and think and act accordingly. As well as providing the starting point for an analysis of human thought and choice, *imago Dei* also provides a starting point for us to ponder the nature of God whose image we are. If we are like him, our most authentically human acts will be theological acts, not just God-directed but also God-revealing.

But there is more still to being the image of God than comprehending the starting points for reflection on us and on God: there is also the question of the relationship to God that we are to have. Augustine says, "You, O God, did not say 'Let there be man, according to his kind' but *Let us make man according to our image and likeness*, for you meant us to discern your will for ourselves."¹⁷ God wants persons to live and act not just as mere creatures, or even as human infants ("babies whom he must feed on milk and care for like a nurse"); he wants a relationship with us as his grown up sons and daughters, intelligent and virtuous adults, and adults of the future. Knowing and obeying God's will – that will we image – is neither accepting alien rule nor asserting oneself. In fact, attentiveness to God exposes the incompleteness of the categories of heteronomy and autonomy: it is precisely because his will is so close to us ("his likeness") that we can neither follow it as alien voice nor identify it with our own voices. Instead, we must work it out, appreciate its centrality for us and yet its objectivity, for ourselves. We are not programmed for God, he is not "self-evident," the immediate and inevitable voice of the autonomous self. And yet we are not heteronomously reliant upon him either, not a reluctant parasite on a divine host. As images of God, we are created to work out the truth for ourselves and so to scrutinize, and take responsibility for, our ends. Being his likeness means having to set out to find him, not beginning with the infantile security of knowing "everything is alright."

The conception of persons as the likeness of God is one of the great keys to human social history. For one thing, it implies the error of relativist and subjectivist thinking and so makes the notion of rational individuality possible – the idea that we stand before truth as individuals, and can and should seek truth and live by it, even if neither our wishes nor our peers agree with us. *Imago dei* claims for persons the duty and the right to think and choose for oneself, and the ability to do this not for subjectivist satisfaction or relativist conformity but by conviction of principles.

Although we exercise our minds as individuals, by exercising them we transcend our individuality. Intelligence means we are not just body: we can find significance in things that are not bodies and are not merely related to our bodily wants or

species demands. What it is for us to find things, even bodies, significant is different from the significance felt by other animals. The capacity for transcendence is not the rather spooky, intuitive “spiritual sense” some describe, but fundamentally intelligence: the capacity for truth, including truths we cannot ourselves articulate. Here, once again, persons are like God. Of course, one of Aquinas’s great doctrines is that both in this life and in the next, *contra* Aristotle and Averroes, we are not one agent intellect. Each individual’s mind is an individual mind, thus in transcending individuality we do not move from the natural individual state to a more authentic supernatural state. The agent intellect is not a supernatural force external to us but is individual to us. Nevertheless, though it is naturally body-fed not God-fed, through it we do grasp general ideas about the way things really are. Thus we are constructed to transcend matter by our individual minds, thereby grasping truth but without losing the inner experience of what grasping some particular truth is like to me as an individual.

Ideas come to human persons with little surrounding information and few inherent connections to our other ideas. But our minds are built to compare and contrast. We consciously assign objects of our thoughts to appropriate kinds, which gives us a terrific advantage over other animals; but having done so, the only way in which we can understand new objects is by analyzing their relations to the kinds we have recognized. None of this process is very God-like (or angelic). But the result of it is that we do possess pieces of knowledge. Of course, we then have to perform many more intellectual tasks with our ideas. Our knowledge fragments are material for subsequent reasoning, material from which the passive intellect may form concepts that express and communicate our complex grasp of different truths. But despite this complex process and the many contingents of health and virtue its success relies upon, we are made to know. It is our nature to recognize what kind of thing an object is, and though our gradual knowing-through-learning is very different from omniscience, as knowers persons are like God.

Because we have thoughts, we also have wills. Like Kant, Aquinas argues that since the will can follow reason, the will is free.¹⁸ Intellect proposes some good – something choice-worthy – to will and, perhaps after resisting various sub-rational enticements, we may come to act on the attraction this good has for us. Of course, we may not act on this particular good but on some other; or we may not act at this moment, or in this way, or with this clarity of motivation, and so on. Our affairs have what sometimes appears to be a rich complexity, but often turns out to be merely emotional or sensory-based confusion. Nevertheless, *the thought of good things* moves our wills freely to seek them. In this phenomenon of our acts there is also mystery – a mystery comparable to the mystery of Creation in which God eternally and creatively wills to seek the good(s) of all creatures. Just as Kant thought, our free choice cannot be explained without chasing away the mystery of its freedom. The best we can do is to say that, once again, in their willing, persons are in various ways like God.

4. Persons are Not Like God

The most important natural facts about human persons are that they are born and they die. We are not like God, who is timelessly eternal. For religious believers, the conception of new human life is a great mystery. Science has uncovered many of the facts concerning the earliest moments of the newly conceived individual. But believers hold that human life (or human “soul”) has a special unity or dynamism that equips us for transcendence and beatitude, and that this unity is not accounted for by the science of the embryo. In the first stages of our existence the equipment for the life of intelligence and love believers expect, is not observable by embryologists; there is no eternity-and-universal-love gene, no genetic guarantee of commitment to truth and virtue. Thus, believers argue, the transcendent human soul can be accounted for only by God’s direct and miraculous act.

Death too is a mystery for believers who hold that human persons do not cease but continue (though in an unnatural and de-personalized state) until again, miraculously, God grants resumed but glorified personal life to his friends. Conception and dying are not miracles but they are surrounded by miracles. These help to integrate us, metaphysically speaking, with the life of God and a destiny with God, but they do not alter the fact that our temporal existence and mortality mean we are not like God. That is why the Christian emblem of the Son of God dead on the cross was, and is, so shocking to the pious of other traditions.

As well as mortal, we are finite and our finitude is expressed in many ways: fragile physical and psychological health, constant physical needs, social needs, spiritual needs, awareness of death, ignorance of much, radical alienation – “original sin.” God is infinite. We are also sexual. We are gendered: sexed right down to the metaphysical roots of our natures at a greater depth even than the depths to which culture, ethnicity, race, religion, preference, and so on, penetrate. We are male and female with a (sometimes clear-cut, sometimes tortured) knowledge of this and an attraction to and for the other sex. God, despite some very confused discussions by recent believers over appropriate devotional language and sacramental discipline, is not gendered.

Perhaps above all, we are not necessary. We might not have been, and everything that has occurred to us or by us might not have been. Human freedom gives some relief here from existential despair: I might not have been but since I am, I can initiate processes of indeterminate effect and benefit; I can appreciate meanings and do good. But we are made and die in contingency; God’s plan need not have included us – a thought even more disorienting than the thought that God need not have created anything at all.

A great theme in twentieth-century theology and philosophy was the attempt to deny we are unlike God by appealing to the nearness and sameness of God to us: God as immanent in our world, subject to change, sharing our suffering, including our political suffering, a brother and fellow-traveler. This makes little sense for the transcendent, monotheistic God. People who hold this view often forget that while Jesus was on Earth, he continued in intense and (to us and his disciples) mysterious prayer to the other two persons of the Trinity. He also exhorted us to pray, and both

in exhorting and responding to our prayer he reminded us that we are not like him. The sense of creatureliness appropriate for human persons is a sense of the complete otherness of God, his transcendence of all created nature; and also a sense of the significance of this, that not being limited by any nature, God is utterly involved with every nature; the ultimate cause and most intimate support of each part of the whole world.

Our being unlike God does not mean remoteness and alienation from God. It is because we are unlike him that we are able to form a genuine community with him. Persons cannot form a community with others just like themselves: communities, and relationships generally, identify difference and individuality and while respecting it, make from this difference a new (comm)unity. Just as God is able to redeem persons because he is unlike them, so persons are able to have community with God because they are unlike him. Dreams of achieving closeness with or sameness to God by means other than divine community are perilously close to the sin of the first parents.

One of the sharpest treatments of persons in Christian thought is Aquinas's Five Ways. These are read in a myriad of ways. But one reading of them is as a prolegomenon to a treatment of man. Understood thus, each Way clarifies something of what human persons are *not* – a sort of “negative anthropology.” On the most obvious reading, the Ways carry us to something – the only thing – we cannot know at all: to God. Since God's existence is his essence, something unknowable to us, the Five Ways are not in any straightforward sense proofs of his *existence*; yet they cannot simply be proofs *that* he exists either, proofs that do not make any reference at all to the character of his existence. Rather, they are proofs that some ways in which we need to talk – about movement, cause, intention – are justified, but that this justification does not rest on us. It rests on “that all men call God.” The five Ways prove God's existence by pointing towards great and meaningful gaps in anthropology. As the universe does not explain itself, so man, the rational animal, cannot explain even the handful of principles at the base of his reasoning.

These five (and how many other?) Ways indicate some very obvious respects in which we are not like God. Rational human thought ponders the cause of movement and first efficient cause, cause of goodness and goal-directedness, and necessary being. The more we ponder these, the clearer it becomes that the ultimate justification for believing in the standards of explanation we do, is God. We cannot vindicate our own minds. We are not like God. We cannot unaided even explain our own most distinctive operations, far less explain anything else. Persons alone in the universe seek the truth, and, ultimately, that truth is the God who created persons as truth-seekers, God-seekers; but part of the truth we discover is that persons are not like God.

The analogies between God and persons are many and complex. What seems to be true is that an understanding of God, insofar as that is possible for a finite and fallen soul, is heavily dependent on a notion of how we are like and unlike him. And an account of the person will benefit too from knowledge of how God is like and unlike us.

Notes

- 1 Boethius, *Contra Eutychen*, 3.
- 2 *ST I*, q. 29, a. 1 ad. 1.
- 3 *ST I*, q. 32, a. 1.
- 4 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 5, 10.
- 5 Herbert McCabe, *God Still Matters* (London: Continuum, 2002), 52.
- 6 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, J.J. Paton, trans. *The Moral Law* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 82 / 437.
- 7 See *Groundwork*, 16 / 401, 77 / 435; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 77; see also *Critique of Practical Reason* 21 and 110 for more on this “impersonal” notion of personhood.
- 8 For the view that our attempts to understand the attributes of persons will always lack transparency and resolution, see Colin McGinn, “Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem,” *Mind* 98 (1989), 349–66 and his *Problems in Philosophy: The Limits of Enquiry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).
- 9 Kant, *Groundwork*, 121 / 459.
- 10 See McCabe’s “God”, in *God Still Matters*.
- 11 See Aquinas *ST I*, q. 105, a. 5.
- 12 Joshua Hoffman and Gary Rosenkrantz “Concluding Remarks”, in *The Divine Attributes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
- 13 Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, 7, 6.
- 14 *On the Power of God*, 6, 5.
- 15 On this, see also *In Sent.* I, 2. 1. 3.
- 16 Augustine, *Confessions* from *The Works of St Augustine*, John Rotelle, ed. (New York, NY: New City Press, 1997), 1: 4.
- 17 Augustine, *Confessions*, 365.
- 18 Aquinas *ST I*, q. 83, a. 1.

Chapter Fifteen

Kenny on Being in Aquinas

Matthew S. Pugh

1. Introduction

Anthony Kenny claims in *Aquinas on Being* that when it comes to the topic of being, “this first-rank philosopher was thoroughly confused”¹ and that it is “not possible to extract from his writings a consistent and coherent theory.”² Indeed after closely examining Aquinas’s most important works, Kenny concludes that there are at least twelve different senses of *esse* at play in these texts. They are (1) specific existence, (2) individual existence, (3) substantial being, (4) accidental being, (5) common being, (6) actual being, (7) absolute being, (8) intentional being, (9) fictional being, (10) possible being, (11) predicative being and (12) identical being. The problem is that Aquinas failed to forge them into a “coherent overall account of being.”³ Kenny believes that there are three reasons for this failure. Firstly, Aquinas failed to recognize the difference between being and existence, particularly specific existence and the other types of “is.”⁴ Secondly, Aquinas failed to see that his theory of spiritual substances as pure form, based as it is on an untenable Platonic theory of Ideas, is incoherent. Thirdly, Aquinas identifies God with subsistent being, which catches him on the horns of a dilemma; either he makes God identical to common being, wherein God becomes the thinnest possible predicate, or God is absolute being, which leads to the absurdity that God’s name is an ill-formed formula.

Now the first of these defects in Aquinas’s theory of being is the most telling one for Kenny, for the second and third defects are directly grounded in Aquinas’s failure to recognize the real difference between specific and individual existence on the one hand, and all of the other senses of *esse* that he uses on the other hand. As a consequence, the various metaphysical theses which Aquinas attempts to defend are undermined.

It is my contention, however, that Aquinas’s theory of being is coherent, because Aquinas did in fact make a fundamental distinction between being and existence (though not the one that Kenny thinks he should have made), and this distinction enables us to make sense of Aquinas’s dearest metaphysical thesis, namely, that God is pure actuality. It is my further contention that Aquinas’s philosophy is a philosophy of being rather than existence that is grounded in the rich actuality, or quantitative sense of *esse*, where *esse* primarily refers to a being’s degree of perfection. Through the mutual convertibility of the transcendentals (particularly of the good with being), *esse* is re-conceived in my interpretation as cause under the

aspect of finality. Under final causality, *esse* as actuality extends “downward” to include hard, individual existence, as well as “upward” to include the maximum instance of actuality understood as ultimate final cause. On my reading, the maximum instance of being is uncaused cause, the absolutely unique, self-subsisting being. By shifting the conceptual emphasis away from the actuality sense of *esse* understood as either existence or property without subject (absolute being), that is, as stand alone property, toward an actuality sense of *esse* treated as ultimate instance of final cause, we are able to see that when Aquinas says that God is pure actuality, he does not mean by pure actuality what Kenny thinks he means by it. But Kenny does not see this because he has misunderstood the distinction that Aquinas does make between being and existence.

2. Kenny’s Distinction

In order to make our case, however, we must firstly examine in some detail what Kenny means by the “difference” between being and existence which he claims that Aquinas failed to make, for as Robert Pasnau has pointed out, Kenny has not been clear about what the difference is, nor about what the real problem is in this case.⁵ Secondly, we must examine in some detail Kenny’s claim that Aquinas’s failure to make this distinction undermines his most important metaphysical thesis, namely, that God is pure subsisting *esse*.

In his enumeration of Aquinas’s twelve senses of *esse*, Kenny says that the first two senses of *esse* correspond to the word “exist.”⁶ These two senses are specific existence and individual existence, respectively. It is a distinction recognized by most philosophers today as being the same as Frege’s 2nd order/1st order, property/predicate distinction. That is, specific existence is a 2nd order predicate which expresses or identifies a 2nd order property, that is, a property of concepts or 1st order properties. In other words, when asking “*an est?*” or “Is there a _____?” the question “Is there a _____?” asks about some kind of thing, and whether that property or concept is instantiated; it does not ask about individuals. Thus to answer “Is there a _____?” with “There is F,” is simply to assert that the concept F is instantiated, or to say “There is some X such that X is F.” Here F is a 1st level predicate identifying a 1st level property, while the expression, “There is some X such that X is _____” identifies the 2nd level property of number (or a property analogous to number). The expression “There is some X such that X is _____” tells us about the number of individuals that fall under the concept F, that there is at least one X such that X is F. As Frege famously said, at the level of specific existence, “existence is analogous to number. An affirmation of existence is in fact nothing other than a denial of the number zero.”⁷ For most followers of Frege, then, existence is not a real property of individuals, not a 1st order property at all, but simply a property of concepts reducible to number, or something analogous to number. All singular existential propositions which appear to treat existence as a real property can be rewritten to form 2nd order propositions about properties of concepts.

Individual existence, on the other hand, signifies a real predicate identifying a real 1st level property of things. Here Kenny parts company with most followers of Frege, and joins Geach instead. He agrees with Geach that "Statements of individual existence ... are genuine predications about what their subject term stands for – as in 'The Great Pyramid still exists, but the Library of Alexandria does not.'"⁸ Indeed, Kenny goes on in a footnote to identify exactly what he means by individual existence; again in agreement with Geach, he says that individual existence is the *actuality* that is attributable to individual objects.⁹ Individual existence, then, is a real property, since it genuinely pertains to individuals. And, since an individual is obviously not a kind, it makes no sense to ask if it is instantiated. Thus there is no need to rewrite 1st level singular existential propositions as 2nd order propositions.

Specific existence and individual existence seem to correspond, then, to what Kenny means by "existence" as opposed to being, though specific and individual existence identify radically different orders of reality. However, though this is a distinction that according to Kenny is found in Aquinas's writings, in rudimentary form, since Aquinas did recognize the legitimacy of the "*an est*" question, it does not, he says, warrant Geach's claim that Aquinas anticipated modern quantifier analysis.¹⁰ Though Aquinas recognized a distinction between the propositional and existential uses of *esse*,¹¹ and a further distinction between the "actuality" and "there is" uses of the *existential esse*,¹² this is not enough to show that Aquinas believed that existential claims could or should be rewritten as "There is some X such that X is F," for Kenny maintains that Geach has not understood that the privations (like blindness) and the parts (like substantial or accidental form) Geach points to to make his case are susceptible to quantifier analysis only because they are incomplete, rather than complete substances.¹³ This is important because Kenny denies that Aquinas recognized a real distinction between specific existence and what Kenny calls being.

Yet Kenny claims that one can identify ten other senses of *esse* at work in Aquinas's writings, and he uses the word "being" to refer to these senses. But what, we might ask, does Kenny mean by "being" in these cases, and what is the status of these other senses of *esse* vis-à-vis specific and individual existence? He does say, of course, that individual existence overlaps, for Aquinas, the 3rd sense of *esse*, namely substantial being. For Aquinas, statements of individual existence like "X is" can be rewritten as "X is F," where F identifies some kind of being in the category of substance. In other words, genuine individuals always exist as some kind of thing, as some kind of substance. To be a being in nature is always to be some kind of being. According to Kenny, however, there is more than a simple overlap between the 1st and 3rd senses of *esse*; there is in fact a necessary equivalence. In statements of individual existence, "S is" is equivalent to "S is P."¹⁴ Statements of individual existence, in other words, are statements about the kind of thing that an individual is. "X is" is thus not a statement about the actuality of X as an *individual*, but (when rewritten as "X is F") is a statement about the kind of thing that the individual X is.

Be this as it may, given that individual existence really means "actuality," one might have thought that Kenny would have found individual existence more

compatible with Aquinas's 4th sense of *esse*, namely, *esse* as actual being, the sense of *esse* that marks the transition in things, for Aquinas, "from potentiality to actuality."¹⁵ More specifically, this is the notion of actuality known as the "1st" actuality, as opposed to the "2nd" actuality, of essence. An individual being is always a being of some kind; as a substance of some kind, it is what it is. In other words, as Kenny says, its essence is what it *is*.¹⁶ Hence a thing is what it is, whatever it is, such that if what a thing is is its being a living thing, for example, then that thing's *esse* and its living are the same. Its being is its living, just as the actuality of a light is its shining. In effect, *esse* is the actuality, *actus*, or activity of a being. First actuality of essence, then, is just the actuality, or activity, of a thing's being what it is. Nevertheless, 1st actuality of essence is only analogously like an activity, and as Robert Pasnau has suggested, 1st actuality of essence should not be regarded as an actual doing of something, but as an actual having the power to do something.¹⁷

Of course, thinking of *esse* in this way has the added advantage of enabling us to distinguish actual being from common being (the 5th sense of *esse*, according to Kenny, to be found in Aquinas's writings), which, because it is common, is "a very thin and universal predicate."¹⁸ Actual being, by contrast, is a rich notion, since a thing's actuality is tied to the kind of essence that it is. Consequently, things have varying degrees of actuality, or degrees of *esse*, precisely because their potential for activity varies with their kinds. This is a notion, as we shall see, that assumes enormous importance for Aquinas.

Further evidence for the apparent compatibility of individual existence and actual being is provided by Kenny himself when he notes that the actual being sense of *esse* is not a copula, but "... a fully fledged predicate."¹⁹ Nevertheless actual being and individual existence are not the same for Kenny. What then is the difference between actual being and individual existence, if the "existence" in individual existence identifies the *actuality* of an individual? It's not clear, but Kenny appears to mean that the actuality of individual existence is just the individual itself, full stop. "Actual being," on the other hand, can never exist as an individual, but is simply that by which things, including individuals of course, fall into the ten Aristotelian categories. Given the other kinds of "being" that Kenny identifies in Aquinas, however, we may safely conclude, I think, that "being" (as opposed to "existence") for Kenny refers to both of Aquinas's propositional and existential senses of *esse* (which includes, for Aquinas, something akin to, but not the same as specific existence), *minus* that *existential* sense of *esse* that identifies genuine, individual substances. For the latter, Kenny reserves the term "individual existence."

Hence for Kenny, a being only "exists" if it is an individual, that is, a material being in the category of substance. Otherwise "existence" simply identifies a property of concepts analogous to number. In this regard, every other sense of *esse* that Aquinas uses identifies some kind of being, but nothing that has genuine existence.

Nevertheless, Aquinas continuously confuses the two, and this makes his fundamental metaphysical thesis, that God is subsisting *esse*, incoherent. How so?

If God is pure *esse*, then this can only mean that God's *esse* is either (a) specific existence, or (b) individual existence. If it is neither of these, then it must be something like pure actuality, in which case it is either (c) the common being of all things, or (d) some kind of absolute being. For Kenny, none of these choices is adequate. If we assume that the existence that is identical to God's essence is specific existence, then "God" equals "For some X, X ... – a quantifier with a bound variable attached to no predicate." Kenny correctly points out that this reduces the divine name to an ill-formed formula. If, on the other hand, we assume that God's *esse* is individual existence, we are led into other difficulties. To say that God's *esse* is individual existence is to say that it is necessarily everlasting existence. But in individual existence "X is" equals "X is F." Hence "X continues to be" equals "X continues to be F." Yet this is true for all creatures. In effect, their essence and existence would be no less inseparable than God's.

But God's *esse* cannot be pure actuality either. Actual being, as we recall, is not the same as individual existence according to Kenny. Yet for Aquinas it functions as a fully fledged predicate. Thus it must either refer to (a) common being or (b) absolute being. But God's *esse* cannot be common being, for in that case God's *esse* would be the same as the *esse* of all things, something that Aquinas is quick to deny. Neither, however, can God's *esse* be absolute being without further addition or supplementation. Actualization must be the actualization of something otherwise it has no content. Minus supplementation, actualization is just common being, the thinnest predicate of all. Aquinas, though, is unwilling to supplement pure actuality. In effect, Aquinas has made God's *esse* no predicate at all. God isn't anything of any kind. Hence "God is" equals "God is _____," where nothing can be substituted for the variable. In other words, "God is," is a claim of which we can make neither logical nor linguistic sense.

Of course, there is always the possibility that Aquinas avoided the problems associated with his thesis through the doctrine of the transcendentals and analogy. For Aquinas, since being does not belong in a genus, being is a term that must be used analogically, in the way "healthy" is used analogically when predicated of a diet, of a complexion, and of a person – that is, when predicated neither univocally (with the same meaning) nor equivocally (with entirely different meanings). The meanings of "healthy" are related, yet are not entirely the same either. Their difference depends on the nature of the thing they describe, or are predicated of, as in a healthy diet, a healthy complexion, or a healthy person. When said of God and creatures, *esse* is being used analogically, according to Aquinas.

Kenny disagrees. "The theory of analogy applies to predicates But 'is' is something more complicated than a predicate."²⁰ The many senses of *esse* used by Aquinas are "... not at all comparable to the difference between 'healthy' when it precedes 'dog,' and 'healthy' when it precedes 'dog food.'"²¹ When we predicate some term like "good," of a creature, as in "X is good," we are saying that X has a certain property. But when we say "God is good" we are not simply saying that God *has* goodness, we are saying that God *is* goodness. Goodness is not a property of God, but "a name that refers to him."²² God just simply is goodness; God and his goodness are identical.

After these and other investigations too numerous to summarize here, Kenny finally concludes that there simply is no meaning of *esse* in Aquinas's works that makes sense of the conclusion that God is identical to either his *esse*, or to pure *esse* itself. The implication is that if Aquinas had understood the real difference between existence and being, that is, if he had not confused the two, he would not have made the claim that God is pure *esse*. But he did confuse the two, and so his thesis is incoherent.

3. Critique and Response

Now Kenny's points, I think, have merit. They cannot just be written off as being the unfair imposition of an ill-fitting Fregean ontology onto a theory of being/existence that simply never conceived of these notions in terms of modern quantifier analysis. It is no doubt true, as some of Kenny's critics have suggested that Aquinas was thinking in a radically different conceptual framework, that his concepts of being and existence are very different from Frege's, and are therefore incoherent only if interpreted (or misinterpreted) along Fregean lines.²³ But Kenny's point, I believe, is that Aquinas *should* have been thinking along these lines, and that even if that was impossible because of the time in which he lived, given what we now know about the correct syntactic use of "exists" as clarified by Frege, we are justified in concluding that Aquinas's theory must be, for us, incoherent. Nor will it do as one reviewer did, to complain about "Kenny's deep-seated belief that what really and truly captures the notion of existence is Frege's quantifier."²⁴ What else would one expect of a Fregean? That is exactly Kenny's point. For Kenny, the quantifier *does* capture the notion of existence, and insofar as Aquinas failed to see this, his theory of being is mistaken. Nor does Kenny claim, for example, that Aquinas knew and used, as such, Frege's 2nd level concept when referring to specific existence; he simply points out that Aquinas recognized the difference between the "*an sit*" and "*quid sit*" questions, and that the "*an sit*" question is a question that modern philosophers think of in terms of quantifier analysis. Thus Kenny is not claiming that Aquinas recognized the Fregean 1st level/2nd level distinction and *then* confused these types of existence with his other senses of being; he is saying that he never understood the Fregean distinction in the first place. And that is the problem. It won't do, then, to supposedly criticize Kenny for claiming that Aquinas made a distinction that Kenny knows Aquinas did not make, and never claims that he did make. Consequently, Kenny's challenge to neo-Thomist philosophers must be taken seriously.

So if we grant that Aquinas did not make the kind of distinction between being and existence that Kenny believes he should have made, did Aquinas make *any* kind of distinction between being and existence, and if he did, what was the nature of that distinction, and how might we use it to address Kenny's concerns?

First, there can be little doubt that Aquinas did make a distinction between being and existence, as a number of Thomists have in recent times realized. For these Thomists (and I count myself among them), Aquinas has a sense of *esse* that is best

translated as “be” or “to be” rather than “exist” or “to exist.” “Exist” or “to exist” is the proper meaning of *existere* not *esse*. Of course one might ask, “Aren’t the two words basically interchangeable?” If we look at how Aquinas uses them, I think the answer must be “no.” *Esse* and *existere*, for example, have different uses and etymologies. *Esse* can function as a copula, while *existere* cannot. *Esse* has a complex, nuanced etymology, while *existere*, coming from *ex* + *sistere* simply means, “to cause to stand,” “to step forth,” “to appear,” “to show oneself,” “to emerge, or come into being,” “to have being in space or time,” “to have being in any specified condition or place with respect to any understood limitation” or “to continue to be.” Nor are the meanings of *esse* and *existere* really interchangeable. We can say, “Can’t you *be* more direct?” but not “Can’t you *exist* more directly?”

Furthermore, as Nijhenuis and others have pointed out, Aquinas wrote a philosophy of being rather than a philosophy of existence.²⁵ Citing the *Index Thomisticus*, for example, Nijhenuis claims that Aquinas uses *esse* about 500,000 times in his writings, but uses *existere* a little more than 4,000 times. *Existencia* is found in his works only sixty-six times.

Now it is true that for the ancient Greeks and Latins, the copulative and existential functions were combined in one word – *einai* and *esse* respectively. But by the time of the medieval Schoolmen, and under the influence of the Arabic language, these functions were separated out, leading to a distinction between essence and existence. Given the history, then, of *esse*, the use of “*est*” in propositions such as “Fido is” or “God is,” is intended to signify more than the simple existence of the subject in question. In fact, the “*est*” in “*X est*” refers to a certain quantitative dimension of *esse*. Aquinas often says, “*Omnia entia inquantum sunt, bona sunt*,” or all beings, to the degree that they have being, are good. Here the “*inquantum sunt*” refers to the degree to which things have being, an obviously quantitative notion. Aquinas also uses *act*, in act, and *actualitas* in a quantitative way.²⁶ These passages, as well as many others, make it clear that it is *esse* in the sense of *actualitas* that is to be treated quantitatively.

The primary sense of *esse*, for Aquinas, thus appears to be *actualitas* understood or treated quantitatively, that is, as having degrees. If we see this in Platonic terms, we can say that *esse* in this sense identifies something that lies between being and non-being, between actuality and potentiality. A being in this sense, therefore, can have “degrees” of being. But “act” in the sense of *existere* (exist), or *existencia* (existence) signifies a thing in a “yes” or “no” fashion, as in “*X* either exists or *X* doesn’t exist.” *Existere* is an all or nothing affair. To put it another way, *esse* has content, but *existere/existencia*, in a strange way, does not.

Esse, then, seems to be inextricably linked, for Aquinas, to content. And this brings to mind the notion of essence, and Kenny’s actual being sense of *esse*, which as we recall, must be divided into 1st actuality and 2nd actuality. First actuality refers to the actuality of essence, while 2nd actuality refers to a being’s operations, and so on. The soul, for example, is that by which a living thing actually is a living thing; it is that by which the thing is actually the kind of thing that it is – as opposed to its operations, which are secondary to its being the kind of thing that it is (though operations flow from the essence). Actual being, of course, can be that by which

beings have all kinds of properties and operations. It therefore identifies a classification that is broader than simple substantial being, or accidental being, though it seems to include these two senses of *esse*. For Aquinas said, as we have seen, that the existential sense of *esse* properly identifies that by which a thing is called a being in actuality in the very nature of things, which can only be things that fall into the ten categories – that is, substance (both primary and secondary), and the nine categories of accident. More specifically, it identifies that by which a thing is a properly subsistent, primary substance. Hence for Aquinas, the actuality of *esse* referred to is not simply the 1st actuality of essence (let alone 2nd actuality), it is also by extension that by which a thing is called a being in actuality in the very nature of things, and in this case, that basically means a primary substance, a subsistent individual.

If we, then, confine ourselves for the moment to the *actuality/esse* that is that by which a being is either actually what it is (1st actuality of essence), or the *actuality/esse* that is that by which a being is subsistent, then the actuality in the first case is always the actuality of some form, which is a lesser kind of *esse* (the *esse* or property of a concept, though not necessarily Frege's concept – it is not incomplete, though it can only be *in* some individual, or *in* the mind by intentionality), since it is not subsistent, or in the 2nd case, the actuality of the individual, full stop. Yet because substantial form can only be (naturally) in individuals, and because individuals must always be some kind of thing, the actuality of individual existence is the same as substantial being. Hence "S is," will always mean "S is P," where P is a predicate in the category of substance. But this actuality (the actuality of the individual) is included by extension in first actuality of essence, *and* in all the secondary actualities of properties, accidents, powers, operations, and so on, and indeed, even intentional being.

Esse then is inextricably linked to essence or content, and by extension to whatever inheres in an individual. The contents of the beings in question, however, differ according to kind and in other ways as well. No doubt for Aquinas *esse* in the sense of actualization is always the actualization of some form, or in the most basic case, of prime matter, which "receives" the form and is actuated (at least in one sense) through the form, for example, substantial form plus the accidents, particularly quantity. Hence when we state "*Socrates est*" or even "*Deus est*," we are saying something more about "X" than simply "X is," in a yes or no fashion. We are stating something about the kind of thing that X is, something about what X actually is, namely, that X actually is F. If X is a living thing, then stating "X is" tells us that X is actually a living thing, that it is in fact what it is, that for X to be is for it to be a living thing. Of course as Kenny rightly points out, that doesn't tell us that X in fact exists. But as we shall see, that is irrelevant, since the question that should concern us here is not "Does God exist?" but "What is God?" Is the claim that God is pure *esse* coherent?

Now the phrase "degrees of being," insofar as these degrees are a function of the content of *esse* in various forms, is often interpreted to mean degrees of perfection. And this is a notion that, as I hope to show, is the key for understanding what Aquinas means by *esse*. How should we understand this notion, and how does it

work for Aquinas? In order to uncover the true meaning of this notion we first have to identify what it is not. The customary way of interpreting this idea of the “degrees of perfection” is to see it in terms of vessels or containers, and what is received into these vessels and containers. Essences are the vessels or containers, and *esse* is what is received into them. *Esse* is determined by the kind of “vessel” into which it is received. It takes the “shape” of the vessel into which it is received. Furthermore, some things have a greater capacity for being than other things, just as some vessels can contain more water than others. So a human being has “more” being than a stone, because in addition to having a material body, humans also have a vegetative soul, a sensitive soul, and a rational soul, and through the latter even become all things. A human being’s capacities, then, greatly exceed those of a stone (as well as plants and animals). Thus beings fall along a scale stretching from those with very little being, or few capacities, like stones, to those having the most being, or many capacities, like human beings and angels. Here it is taken for granted that Aquinas is talking about *kinds* of capacities – many animals have greater physical power, capacities, and prowess than human beings do. So it is a being’s essence that determines, or limits, its capacity for *esse* in various ways. This is just another way of saying that things have degrees of potentiality and hence varying capacities for actualization, depending on the kind of thing that they are.

Furthermore Aquinas sees this scale culminating in a unique ultimate being (God) that combines in its essence every perfection that is found in creatures (though found in them in limited degrees). Creatures are placed on the scale according to how they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum in the genus in question, such as the good, the true, the noble, and so on. Hence the more closely a creature approximates or imitates in its various ways the ultimate instance of that perfection, the more perfect it is, that is, the more *esse* it has, since *esse* is that by which a creature actually has the perfections that it has. God then must be *unlimited esse*; no restrictions of any kind apply to him. Yet once again the primary metaphor is that of *limited*, as opposed to *unlimited*, *esse*.²⁷ In fact it is the old Platonic notion of participation, and it seems as if Kenny is right when he says that Aquinas’s God, in spite of his denials, is really just the Platonic Idea of Being in disguise.

That, however, is not the best interpretation of what Aquinas is up to here, which becomes clear if we take a closer look at the “fourth way” (which Kenny believes to be utterly unsalvageable):²⁸ Aquinas says:

Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; And this we call God. (*ST* I, q. 2, a. 3)

Though the fourth way is often understood from the standpoint of either efficient causality or exemplar causality,²⁹ the best way may be to understand it from the standpoint of final causality. We note that Aquinas says that the maximum in question is not simply the cause of the *being* of all things, it is fundamentally the

cause of the goodness, truth, nobility, and so on, of all things. It is the cause, in other words, of their perfections. But being, as we shall see, perfects as final cause. A being's actuality (not existence) must thus be understood to be the result of a being's "desire" to possess and rest in the ultimate perfection or final cause that perfects it both extrinsically and intrinsically. (In which case, of course, the being in question already exists). Hence the maximum in question is just the ultimate final cause. We also note that Aquinas does not say here that the maximum is being itself. The comparison is with the maximum instance of heat in the genus of heat, namely, fire. As the maximal instance of heat, fire is the cause of the hotness of all hot things. But fire is not heat itself. Heat only exists in hot things. Of course we know that being is not a genus according to Aquinas, nor is God in a genus. So, though the comparison is with the genus of heat and the kinds of hot things that fall within the genus of heat, the range of beings in question in regard to the "genus" of being, to the extent that they can be scaled or placed together at all, constitute a pseudo-genus, which is not to be confused with either *ens commune*, which is the subject matter of metaphysics, or *esse commune*, which is also subordinate to God, though not as the subject matter of metaphysics. One might, however, view this set as a set of beings of which being can be predicated, though predicated analogously; again keeping in mind that the set of which these beings are members does not constitute a genuine genus. Nevertheless, just as "heat" in the genus heat is not itself a being, so neither is *esse* in the pseudo-genus of being a being. *Esse* only exists in some being. The maximum in the set thus identifies that being that completely manifests the perfection in question. If we view this maximum as the ultimate, final cause, then we see that this must be the cause of the perfections of all things, since *esse* perfects as end. The maximum is the maximum of actuality, but understood as final cause. And, since it is final, it is uncaused. As such, it is self-subsisting cause. We note again that the maximum is not the same as *esse* itself. If that were the case, then God would indeed be the same as the Platonic Idea of Being. In other words, what is at issue here is actuality, or as Aquinas tells us, that "by which a thing is called a being in actuality in the very nature of things," and this of course is some cause, which must itself be actual in order to be that by which something else is actually what it is. Here we can anticipate Aquinas's thinking on this matter. The ultimate cause must be uncaused (lest there be an infinite regress), and furthermore, since the pseudo-genus is that of actuality, the maximal instance of actuality will be the cause of the actuality of every property or perfection in everything less than itself, that is, it will be the cause, ultimately, of the goodness, the truth, the nobility of all things, and so on.

My purpose here is not to defend the "fourth way," but to uncover how Aquinas understands it, and then to see how it might be used to respond to Kenny. Three things, I think, are needed for this task. Firstly, we must take seriously Aquinas's doctrine of the transcendentals, and especially of their convertibility (particularly of goodness) with being. Secondly, we must see *actuality/esse* as Aquinas sees it; as that by which a thing is called a being in actuality in the very nature of things. Thirdly, we must understand that "that by which" is to be viewed as cause. Thus the notion of the "degrees of *esse*/degrees of perfection" must be re-interpreted in terms

of causality, and most importantly (when combined with the idea of the transcendentals), final causality.

Ultimately, we must shift the emphasis of our thinking about *esse* away from thinking of it as either *existere* or even *actualitas* (as long as *actualitas* is thought to be a stand alone property), and toward thinking of *esse* in terms of causality, and specifically, final causality.

Now this is a shift that we can easily make if we keep in mind Aquinas's notion of the convertibility of the transcendentals with *esse*. Certainly Aquinas's theory of the transcendentals is plain enough. He says that the transcendentals "being," "one," "good," "true" and "beauty," are prior in the order of understanding, absolutely considered, to the other divine names. In comparison with each other, however, they are mutually convertible, since they are identical in subject, or are included in *esse* unitedly and indistinctly, as their source. In regard to their concepts, *esse* is absolutely prior to the other transcendentals – *esse* is included in their concepts, though not conversely. Hence *esse* is, among the transcendentals, the most proper of the divine names.

Yet the other transcendentals are not absolutely the same as *esse*, for they do add to *esse* a certain intelligible aspect. Indeed, all of the transcendentals are arrived at by addition to *esse* insofar as they express a mode of *esse* which the term "*esse*" does not itself express. This addition can take place in two ways: (1) the mode of *esse* expressed is some special mode of *esse*, such as being-through-itself, or substance; (2) the mode of *esse* expressed is consequent to every being. The second way can be divided into (2a) that mode which is consequent to every being in itself, expressed either affirmatively, as in "*res*," or negatively, as in indivision, or "one," and (2b) that mode consequent upon every being in relation to something, expressed either, (2bi) according to the division of one thing from another, as in "something," or (2bii) with respect to the conformity of one thing to anything else. Of course this last type of expressed mode presupposes that there be something whose nature it is to accord with everything else, in both its appetite and cognitive dimensions. Insofar as *esse* is conformed to the soul's appetite, it is said to be good; insofar as it is conformed to the soul's intellect, it is said to be true. For Aquinas, the "good" and "true" add a relation to *esse*, the "good" relation to an end and the "true" relation to our cognitive power.

The "content" of *esse*, therefore, refers precisely to the transcendentals and their mutual convertibility. They are identical in subject, and are included in *esse*, unitedly and indistinctly, as their source. Thus *esse* in the sense of actuality means more than simple *existere* or *existentia*.

This is particularly apparent when it comes to the transcendental "good." Good is convertible with *esse*; it is included in *esse* as its source. And like the other transcendentals, good adds to *esse* a certain intelligible aspect; in this case relation to an end, since the "good" properly regards the appetite. Aquinas says that the relation good adds to *esse* is an affirmative relation of reason alone. Now in a relation of reason alone, of two *relata*, what does not depend is referred to what does depend. By contrast, in a real relation, of two *relata*, what does depend is referred to what does not depend. Thus in the relation obtaining, for example,

between the *relata* the knowable and knowledge, the knowable is related to knowledge by reason alone, since the knowable does not depend on knowledge. The relation of knowledge to the knowable, however, is a real relation, since knowledge really does depend on the knowable. As Aquinas says

the knowable is said to be relative (or better referable) not because it is itself referred to anything else, but because something else is referred to it, and so it is with all other things that are related to each other as measure and measured, or as perfective and perfectible. (*De ver.* XXI, q. 1)

Thus good adds to *esse* a relation of reason alone, but the relation that it adds is perfectiveness. A being, though, can be perfective of another being, either as regards the perfecting thing's specific intelligible nature, form or essence, or as regards the perfecting thing's *esse*, its act of being, or *actualitas*. Insofar as a being perfects the intellect according to the perfecting thing's form, it adds the true to *esse*. However, because the *esse* of the form is not present in the intellect according to its natural *esse*, the truth that is added to *esse* is in the mind only. But insofar as a being perfects another according to the perfecting thing's *esse*, it adds the good to *esse*. The very *esse* of the perfecting thing, then, is perfective of another's *esse*. Most importantly, that which perfects another by its very *esse* necessarily has the nature of an end. The good, therefore, adds to *esse* final causality. To quote Aquinas, "Goodness, then, is primarily and principally predicated of another *in the manner of an end*."³⁰

When the transcendental good is taken into consideration, then, we see that *esse* in the sense of actuality takes on a whole new color, namely, that of final causality. We should note, furthermore, that this pertains primarily to *esse*, not essence. The content involved here is the content of *esse*, which is not reducible to essence, though it is never found apart from essence. A thing's essence, absolutely considered, suffices for predicating *esse* of it through that essence, but essence does not suffice for predicating goodness of a thing, *precisely because goodness adds to esse a relation of final causality*. This means that from the standpoint of final causality, beings are not good essentially but participatively. A thing takes on the aspect of final causality, and hence is good, insofar as it is ordered as a secondary end to some ultimate final end. As Aquinas says, "But in the case of the creature's essence, a thing is said to be good only in relation to God, from which relation it acquires the aspect of a final cause. And thus in this sense it is said that the creature is not good essentially, but participatively."³¹ A being's final causality, its goodness, is only made possible by its containment in a series or hierarchy of secondary final causes that is itself ordered to one, final, ultimate cause. For Aquinas, then, goodness, which has the nature of an end, is grounded in being understood from the standpoint of *esse*, for though the good adds perfectiveness to being, it does so via the perfecting thing's act of being, or *esse*, as final end, or cause. Furthermore, Aquinas claims that everything having the nature of an end has the nature of goodness, since the essence of goodness is that something be perfective of another in the manner of an end. But there are two things which

characterize an end: (1) the end is what is sought after or desired by those who have not yet attained it, and (2) the end is desired, or is desirable to, those things which share in its possession. The first signifies a being's tendency to realize or possess its end; the second signifies a being's resting in its end. But these two things characterize *esse*. "These two things belong to the very act of being," to which Aquinas adds, "The very act of being thus has the character of goodness."³²

Now this way of viewing *esse* has profound implications for the question of the degrees of *esse*/degrees of perfection idea, for if the essence of goodness lies in final causality (a being is good insofar as it is perfective of another in the manner of an end), and if end is marked by tendency and rest, and these characterize the very nature of *esse*, then a being's *esse* is perfective not only of another, but also of itself. Yet because a being's *esse* must ultimately be viewed relationally, that is, in reference to the whole hierarchy of extrinsic ends through which it has received *esse*, that being's *esse* must be understood participatively. In effect, the *esse* which perfects a being intrinsically cannot be disconnected from that which perfects it extrinsically.

The consequence of viewing *esse*, and hence goodness participatively, is to understand that goodness is at once perfective both extrinsically and intrinsically. Goodness/*esse* perfects extrinsically insofar as a contingent being is caused by another, that is, insofar as the former stands in a real relation to the latter as that which is perfective of the first in the manner of a final cause, and it perfects intrinsically insofar as a being's *esse* is perfective of it as an end, that is, insofar as there is an inner tendency in every being to actualize, perfect, fulfill, or realize its hidden potency.³³ But the *esse* that perfects intrinsically is *esse* received from something else, and ultimately from God himself. For Aquinas, then, goodness is indeed grounded in being, though understood as *esse*, as a being's perfection or realization. And since this means the *esse* of any contingent being is necessarily participated *esse*,³⁴ and since a thing perfects another in regard to the perfecting thing's *esse*, then this also means that the goodness of a contingent creature is participated goodness. One thing's *esse* is perfective of another being, but some other *esse* is perfective of the first. All of these, though, are ordered to some final or ultimate end, which is not itself ordered to any other being. And the importance of this cannot be overstated. As Aquinas says:

The influence of an efficient cause is to act; that of a final cause is to be sought, or desired. A secondary agent acts by the efficacy of the first agent existing in it; similarly, a secondary end is sought only by reason of the worth of the principle existing in it inasmuch as it is ordained to the principle end, or has its likeness. *Accordingly, because God is the last end, He is sought in every end*, just as, because He is the first efficient cause, He acts in every agent. But this is what tendency to God implicitly means. For the efficacy of the first cause is in the second as principles of reasoning are in the conclusions. (*De ver.* XXI, q. 2)

This quote makes it clear that goodness is both extrinsic and intrinsic to a being; extrinsic insofar as a being is perfected by another and intrinsic insofar as every being has *esse*. But if this is true, then a being is good not fundamentally by

essence, but by participated *esse*. This in turn means that the first end is in the secondary ends, both in the end extrinsic to a being and perfective of it as final cause, and in the end intrinsic to a being and perfective of it also as final cause, as its own act of being. What this implies, of course, is that the end is not only in the being that perfects another being extrinsically, but more importantly, is in the very *esse* of the perfected being. A being's *esse* thus participates not only the secondary *esse* or end which perfects it extrinsically, but also the first end which is in every end. Since a thing's being is both intrinsically perfecting and extrinsically perfected, every creature, in seeking its own being (*esse*, not *existere*) as an end, also, and necessarily seeks – given that all contingent *esse* is participated *esse* – what extrinsically perfects it as its end. In other words, in seeking its own being, every creature, in order to realize itself, also and necessarily seeks the highest end, or ultimate *esse*.³⁵

If we now return to some of our earlier considerations, we see that *esse* is always the *esse* of some being; it is never “by itself,” never itself a being. Hence that by which a thing is called a being in actuality in the very nature of things must be, when treated as final cause, either a being, or a part of some being, which perfects either extrinsically, as in a substance, or intrinsically, as in a substantial form, accident, and so on. In other words, if we understand actuality in terms of the participation of an *effect in its cause*, then we see that *esse* treated quantitatively in terms of degrees of *esse*, and specifically degrees of perfection, forms a hierarchy of beings that must culminate in a being that is the maximal instance of *esse*. But this maximal instance of *esse* is a cause that is final. *Esse*, here, is just final cause. It is that which causes other things to be actually what they are through its perfecting activity as an end; as the ultimate final end. This maximal instance is *a* being, though an absolutely unique being, but it most certainly is not *esse* itself, any more than fire is self-subsisting heat. Fire is the maximal instance of heat, but it is not heat itself.³⁶

In other words this instance is not pure actuality or absolute being in the way that Kenny thinks of absolute being; it is not a predicate that is empty of content, and therefore uninformative. This being has an essence, but its essence is just to be that which all things seek and desire to rest in – which they must seek since as ultimate final end the maximal end is in each of the lesser ends lying in the hierarchy, though *in them only in the sense in which a cause is present to its effect*. Were the maximal instance not in the secondary ends by participation (of effect in cause, not by Platonic participation, I emphasize again), there would be no actualization of anything, no beings at all. Nor is this instance the same as the unlimited, as in the metaphor of ocean and containers. God is only unlimited in the sense that the maximal instance of *esse* is uncaused. It is a cause that does not itself depend on any other cause. It is genuinely self-subsistent.

Of course this maximal instance of *esse* is not to be confused with common being, either *esse commune* or *ens commune*. God is neither the *esse* or actuality that is common to all things, and that all things other than God participate in, nor is he the subject matter of metaphysics. Even though Aquinas treats common being as a transcendental and not a universal (since it “steps over,” or “steps across” the

categories), it is nevertheless caused by God, as Thomas clearly states in *De Trin.* q. 5, a. 4. The common being (*ens commune*) of metaphysics is the subject matter of the discipline itself, but the *cause* of the subject matter (the study of which constitutes the higher part of the discipline), is to be distinguished from the subject matter. God also takes priority over *esse commune*, even though the latter does not technically constitute the subject matter of metaphysics. Now common being can exist in matter and motion, though it need not exist that way. Its nature is to be neither with matter, nor without matter. The *cause* of common being, on the other hand, is to be always without matter. In other words, *it is* part of the meaning of the term, as Kenny puts it, that matter (or anything, for that matter) should *not* be added to God's *esse*, while for common being it is *not part* of the meaning of the term that something *should* be added to it, nor is it part of the meaning of the term that something *should not* be added to it; in this respect it is like the common term "animal." It is not part of the meaning of "animal" that reason should be added to it, nor is it part of the meaning of "animal" that reason should not be added to it – some animals are rational, some are not; "animal" can be predicated of all of them.

It does not follow from this, however, that we cannot say that God's *esse* is not any kind of thing (though nothing is added to it), for *esse* in the sense of actuality means, first and foremost, cause, particularly final cause. But this is just to call it good, since it is the final end that is perfective of everything else, both extrinsically and intrinsically. As we recall, when we say God is F, and then substitute *esse* for F, we are, according to Kenny, saying that no predicate may be substituted for F, since *esse* is not a predicate – it identifies no kind of thing. But in fact it does – it identifies a cause that is itself without cause. "God" here is not the ultimate reification of *esse*, God is the ultimate instance of cause – in this case, uncaused cause. He is that, ultimately, by which things are caused to be beings in actuality in the very nature of things. He is not that which remains when a being is stripped of all of its identifying properties; not *esse* minus the ten categories. "God is F" only becomes an incomplete sentence, an ill-formed formula, if no genuine predicate is put in F's place. God's *esse*, as Kenny understands Aquinas's use of it, is no predicate at all. Hence "God is F" becomes "God is ...," an ill-formed formula indeed. But *esse* does tell us something about God; it tells us a great deal about the kind of being that he is.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, we see that Aquinas does make a distinction between being and existence, though this is not exactly the one that Kenny thinks he should have made. For Kenny, the distinction must be a hard and fast one, even though he calls Aquinas's overlap between individual existence and substantial being "sound enough." But the existence sense of *esse* must, in order to be correct, incorporate the Fregean interpretation of specific existence. This, of course, is what Aquinas failed to do. I believe, on the other hand, that the key to a coherent theory of being for Aquinas lies in actual being. For actual being identifies that existential sense of

esse that by Aquinas's own account includes not only the actuality of various operations, powers, and abilities, but *also* the actuality of accidental and substantial being, *and by extension*, the actuality of individual existence. As we recall, Aquinas says:

Esse is the act of a being insofar as it is a being, *that by which* something is called a being in actuality in the nature of things; and in this sense *esse* is only attributed to those things which are in the ten categories ...³⁷

And he adds:

Esse can be attributed in two ways. In one way as that which properly and truly has *esse*, or is; and in this way it is attributed only to self-subsistent substance. But things which are not self-subsistent but exist *in and with something else*, whether they are *accidents* or *substantial forms*, or *any kinds of parts*, do not have *esse* so that they really are, but *esse* is attributed to them in a different way, that is, as *that by which* something is.³⁸

Both of these passages focus on “that by which” something is either (1) a being in the category of substance, a primary, self-subsisting individual, or (2) some kind of thing, substantially, accidentally, or otherwise. In either case, what is really at issue here is actuality. Actual being thus seems to extend “downward” through common being, accidental being, and substantial being, only to “bottom out” in individual existence. The real question is, does actual being extend upward as well, to include Absolute being? I think the answer to this question is “yes” and “no.” If we think of *esse* in terms of the transcendentals and their mutual convertibility, particularly of *esse* with the good, and understand that when so viewed *esse* becomes final end that perfects both extrinsically and intrinsically, that is, when we understand that *esse* must be thought primarily as cause, then the “that by which” is treated as Aquinas meant it to be treated. It identifies either a being, or a part of a being (what inheres in something else, but is not itself subsistent). And we know that for Aquinas, this hierarchy of beings (or goods if you will), must terminate in an ultimate being or good. But this being is just the maximal instance of cause, particularly final cause. As *truly final*, it must be uncaused. In effect, it must be the *maximal* instance of self-subsistence. But this is not an unspecified being. It is ultimate final cause; uncaused cause; source of the perfection of all things; that whose nature is to be without matter, and so on.

However, if we confine ourselves strictly to *esse* itself, and forget about the other transcendentals and their mutual convertibility, then Kenny's criticisms hold. Certainly God's *esse* cannot be viewed as existence, either individual or specific, without leading to absurdity, though we must remember, of course, that this is not a real problem for Aquinas, for he treats *esse* primarily as actuality, which he views quantitatively, as having degrees. These degrees of being, however, are just the same as the degrees of perfection. In effect, Aquinas sees them in terms of final causality. If, on the other hand, God's *esse* is treated as pure actuality, as stand alone property, without taking into account the mutual convertibility of the

transcendentals, then God's *esse* becomes something that is simply unspecified – it is not common being, but neither is it anything else. Instead of God being a being to which nothing can be added, he becomes a void. Instead of being that absolutely unique being that is the fullest of beings, the absolutely complete, perfect, maximal instance of being, he becomes utterly empty; he is not even the thinnest of predicates, namely, common being. Left at that, Kenny is right; Aquinas's theory of being is incoherent, and that incoherence undermines his dearest metaphysical thesis. If we add the considerations I have mentioned, however, then I think Aquinas's theory is coherent.

Finally, if Aquinas's philosophy is a philosophy of being, not existence, how are we to understand the exact relation between being and existence according to Aquinas? Is there any place for existence in it at all? As we have seen, *esse* as actuality includes what Kenny calls individual existence/substantial being. We might ask, then, if the set of actual beings constitutes a Platonic scale of being, ranging from that which has the least being or degree of perfection, to that which has the most being, or greatest degree of perfection? In other words, since actual being extends "downward" through common being and accidental being, to substantial being/individual existence, and "upward" to include absolute being, does common being have a greater degree of being, and hence more perfection, than say, accidental being? Thinking Platonically, the answer would be "yes," but if we think as Aquinas did, then the answer is a qualified "no." In one sense, the individual has the least degree of being, and hence the least degree of perfection, because it is a material being. Matter, of course, is what individuates form in the ten categories, and is as such, pure potency. Yet Aquinas's metaphysics, like Aristotle's, is a metaphysics of primary substance; it is the individual, primary substance that takes center stage, not form, either substantial or accidental. In one respect, then, individuals are the beings that are most actual in Aquinas's philosophy. In another respect, however, they are the least actual, for they have the greatest potential for actualization. Paradoxically, they have genuine existence, but little *esse*. For the degrees of perfection apply to *esse*, not existence. A being either exists, or it doesn't. Individuals exist, but as material have little *esse*.

But not all beings are individuals, for not all beings are material beings. Some are separated substances (*substantial* forms, we should note, not Platonic forms, as Kenny suggests), and one is God. As *beings*, they also exist, and in this respect, they are no different than material beings. As *separate beings*, that is, as *existing* things, they have a perfection analogous to individuals. They nevertheless have a much greater degree of being, and hence actual perfection, precisely because they are not material beings.

Of course, whether material beings or spiritual beings, *esse* is that by which a being is some kind of a being. *Esse*, in other words, is that by which a thing comes to stand on its own as the kind of thing that it is; it is that by which a thing (or that which causes a thing), "steps forth" into existence or comes into existence. The "activity" of *esse* which causes a being to "step forth," gives rise to existence, to that which "continues to be through time." Put another way, *esse* gives rise to *existere*, and finally to *existentia* itself. But this is not as strange as it sounds, for

existence here is just a way of being that things have. Existence is, in effect, a kind of being, though the “kind” in question is not an essence.

Now given that *esse*, or that by which things come to be, is always a being, or part of a being, *esse* forms a hierarchy of beings or final causes which terminates in an ultimate final cause, which causes whatever is not only to be, but to exist as well. It is that by which things step forth into existence and continue to be either material things, or spiritual things, that is, it is the actuality which “gives” existence to things, the actuality which makes things actually be the kinds of things that they are. God is thus the cause of both the being and existence of things, keeping in mind that these are not the same. Though he is himself uncaused, and hence unlike any other being, he is nevertheless that being by which every other being exists. In this regard, existence is paradoxically derived from being, *existentia* from *esse*. Taken strictly, then, one could say God doesn’t exist, though as the fullness of being God is the source of all that does exist. Yet this simply means that God does not have *that* kind of being, for his being is *not* caused to be; he is purely self-subsisting cause.

In sum, if we disregard these points, if we fail to see how being is related to existence for Aquinas, then Kenny is right; neither existence nor absolute being can be applied to God without leading to incoherence. If, however, we keep sight of these points, then being as understood by Aquinas, namely, as ultimate final cause, can be predicated of God without incoherence.

Notes

- 1 Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Being* (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), v.
- 2 *Aquinas on Being*, 89.
- 3 *Aquinas on Being*, 89.
- 4 *Aquinas on Being*, 89.
- 5 Robert Pasnau, “Review of Aquinas on Being,” in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 12 no. 3 (Dec. 2003).
- 6 *Aquinas on Being*, 189.
- 7 *Aquinas on Being*, 200.
- 8 *Aquinas on Being*, 43.
- 9 *Aquinas on Being*, 43.
- 10 *Aquinas on Being*, 75.
- 11 In pointing to the difference between the predication and existential uses of *esse*, Kenny cites *Quodl.* IX, 2, 2, 3. “In one way it is the verbal copula indicating the complexity of any proposition which the mind forms: this *esse* is not anything in nature, but is only in the act of the mind forming affirmative and negative propositions, and in this way *esse* can be attributed to anything about which a proposition can be formed, whether it is a being or a privation of being; for we say there is blindness. In the other sense *esse* is the act of a being insofar as it is a being, that by which something is called a being in actuality in the nature of things; and in this sense *esse* is only attributed to those things which are in the ten categories, so being in this sense of *esse* is divided into the ten categories.”

- 12 In pointing to the difference between the two kinds of existential *esse*, Kenny cites, again, *Quodl.* IX, 2, 2, 3. "This *esse* can be attributed in two ways. In one way, as to that which properly and truly has *esse* or is; and in this way it is attributed only to self-subsistent substance. But things which are not self-subsistent, but exist in and with something else, whether they are accidents or substantial forms, or any kinds of parts, do not have *esse* so that they really are, but *esse* is attributed to them in a different way, that is, as that by which something is. Thus whiteness is said to be, not because it is subsistent itself, but because to it something else owes it that it is white."
- 13 *Aquinas on Being*, 77.
- 14 *Aquinas on Being*, 190.
- 15 *Aquinas on Being*, 191.
- 16 *Aquinas on Being*, 58.
- 17 Pasnau, "Review," 6.
- 18 *Aquinas on Being*, 190.
- 19 *Aquinas on Being*, 59.
- 20 *Aquinas on Being*, 155.
- 21 *Aquinas on Being*, 155.
- 22 *Aquinas on Being*, 156.
- 23 Gyula Klima, "On Kenny on Aquinas on Being: A Critical Review of Aquinas on Being by Anthony Kenny." (unpublished). Available online at <http://www.fordham.edu/gsas/phil/klima/FILES/Kenny.pdf>.
- 24 Klima, "On Kenny," 8.
- 25 John Nijenhuis, "'Ens' Described as 'Being or Existent'," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (1994), 1–14.
- 26 Cf. *QDP* 1, 2; 5, 8; 3, 4; *De ente* c. 4, 29; *ST* I, q. 48, a. 2.
- 27 Typically this type of participation is re-conceived in terms of either composition or similitude. In either case, participation centers on the notion of limitation. In composition, participation means that some perfection, say *esse*, is received in a subject that somehow contains, and so thereby limits, what is received in it. Prior to containment, the perfection in question is unlimited. In similitude, participation means that different degrees of the same perfection, already limited beforehand, are received in various subjects. In similitude limitation is prior to composition. In similitude, participation applies to both essence and *esse*; essence is a less perfect likeness of an exemplar idea in the mind of God, while *esse* is itself limited by virtue of the fact that it participates in *esse subsistens*.
- 28 Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 71–95.
- 29 See, for example, John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 469–80.
- 30 Cf. *QDV* XXI, q. 1 and 2.
- 31 *QDV* XXI, q. 1.
- 32 *QDV* XXI, q. 2.
- 33 How, one might ask, can goodness be both extrinsic and intrinsic to a being, if Aquinas's claims in *QDV* XXI, q. 1 are true? If goodness adds no reality to being, that is, if goodness is related to being only conceptually, rather than really, and if this relation is an extrinsic relation, how can goodness be intrinsic to any being? Doesn't this change the relation not only into an intrinsic relation, but a real relation as well? In fact it doesn't, as long as we keep two things in mind: (a) the intrinsic relation is nothing more than the re-statement, so to speak, of the extrinsic relation within the being in

question, which means that the end (*esse*) intrinsic to a thing is the relation given to the thing by that which perfects it as an end; (b) the relation can only be understood from the standpoint of participation, namely the participation of *esse* in *esse*. In effect, the notion of the extrinsic end as *esse* cannot be separated in reality from the notion of the extrinsic end (the *esse* of the other, and indeed of all the others to which the *esse* of the being in question is linked) which perfects the being of the first.

- 34 As noted above, participation is the key to understanding how goodness is both extrinsic and intrinsic to any created being. But this requires that we specify exactly how Aquinas uses this term. A most insightful study of this problem is given in John Wippel's "Participation and the Problem of the One and the Many," in his *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. In that article Wippel attempts to address three questions concerning participation, all of which are relevant to our study. (1) What does Thomas mean by participation, specifically of beings in *esse*? (2) If beings participate in *esse*, is this meant primarily as *esse commune*, or subsisting *esse* (God)? (3) Does participation primarily mean composition or similitude? The important point to note is that the answers to all three questions are unified by a *notion of participation primarily understood as the participation of an effect in its cause*.
- 35 God communicates his perfection as an agent not contained in any genus at all, wherein the effects produced by the agent participate in the agent's form neither generically or specifically, but only according to some sort of analogy, as is the case for *esse commune*. "In this way all created things so far as they are beings, are like God as the first and universal principle of all things" (*ST I*, q. 4, a. 3). For Aquinas, then, the key to participation seems to lie in the notion of subsistence vs. non-subsistence. And this distinction, in turn, is conceived causally. How, then, is God in things according to Thomas? God is in all things as a cause is present to its effects. He is in his effects, but is radically different from them. Since God is the cause of the very being of the creature, were this not the case, creatures would cease to be. Their being is an imitation of God's perfection, and is limited as such, precisely because they are caused, that is, because they are not self-subsisting things. As he says in *ST I* q. 8, a. 1, "God is in all things, not indeed as a part of their essence, nor as an accident, but as an agent is present to that upon which it works. ... Now God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being ... Therefore as long as a thing has being, God must be present to it ... But being innermost in each thing and fundamentally inherent in all things since it is formal with respect to everything found in a thing. Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermost." Thomas has in mind here agent causality, but we could think of this just as well in terms of final causality, especially in reference to the being, rather than the existence, of things.
- 36 In this regard I must respectfully disagree with Barry Miller. God is not simply a limit case, but neither is he simply a limit *simpliciter*. He is a limit *simpliciter* in that, in a series of Fs, he *is* an F in that he is a being, in that he is a cause, and indeed the ultimate cause. He is perfective of all other things in the manner of an end. Yet he is also *not* an F, in that he is uncaused cause. He is, in effect, truly final, that is, he is genuinely self-subsistent. To use Miller's analogy, if God is a limit case, then in a series of final causes, God as the limit case toward which the series points, would not himself be a cause, just as the limit case of a line is not a line, but a point. Ultimately, the limit *simpliciter*/limit case distinction may not be helpful here. Cf. Barry Miller, *The Fullness of Being* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 137–52.
- 37 *Quodl.* 2, 2, 3. Cited in *Aquinas on Being*, 74–75.
- 38 *Quodl.* 2, 2, 3. Cited in *Aquinas on Being*, 74–75.

Chapter Sixteen

G. E. M. Anscombe and Thomas Aquinas on Necessity and Contradiction in Temporal Events

Stephen L. Brock

1. Introduction: Anscombe's Criticism of Thomas on the Object of Knowledge

Among the leading figures in the emergence of what is called "Analytical Thomism," we must certainly count the late G. E. M. Anscombe.¹ But when we rummage through her publications for her writings on Thomas, we are met with something of a surprise. As far as I can ascertain, there is only a single piece, her "Necessity and Truth."² It is very short, and in fact most of it is a criticism.

The target is Thomas's view, which Anscombe traces back to Plato and Aristotle, that human knowledge can be only of what is necessary. She focuses on knowledge of temporal events:

Of itself this [opinion] would not exclude history from being known since Aristotle held that the past is necessary; but St Thomas goes farther than this in his adherence to the Greek conception of knowledge; in the field of speculative reason, he says everything derives from some first, indemonstrable principles which are known of themselves. Indeed in at least one place (1a2ae, 94, 2c) we find him saying that everything in this sphere is "founded upon" the principle of contradiction.³

Anscombe goes on to object to this view because of its implications for knowledge of the future. Whatever Thomas says, she argues, he cannot consistently hold that there is any such knowledge:

Our own knowledge of future events is only in their present causes; when these do not absolutely necessitate their effects, so that the effects are contingent, he thinks we cannot know them. But, we might argue on his own principles, what causes in the world cannot conceivably be tampered with, at least by divine power? Thus we can know nothing of the future.⁴

Anscombe does note that this conception of knowledge is not as archaic as it might seem:

Indeed if one speaks in the manner of Plato of “objects of knowledge” and “objects of opinion” it will be replied by everyone that these things do not have to differ in their objects. But ... it is a standard method to test any philosophical assertion – for example, “Emotion always has an object”, “A cause must be prior to its effect” – by considering whether a counter-example to it can be conceived without contradiction. Contradiction indeed may have to be rather generously conceived: not every inconceivability can be displayed as of the form “both thus and not thus”, where the two occurrences of the word “thus” are replaced by the same term. Sometimes an inconceivability seems irreducibly of the kind where the two “thuses” receive different substitutions as in “both coloured and not extended” or – to take examples claimed by Aquinas – “both a human being and lacking any potentiality for laughter”, “both an existent by sharing in existence and uncaused” (1a, 3, 6c and 44, 1 ad 1).⁵

Nonetheless, she wants to insist that there can be knowledge of what is not necessary, that is, of what can conceivably be other than it is known to be:

Knowledge is not restricted to what could not imaginably turn out mistaken: given that there are not more specific grounds for refusing the title ‘knowledge’ to my claim that something is true, it is sufficient that the claim does not turn out mistaken. It may be that I can conceive circumstances that would prove me wrong; that does not show that I may be wrong.⁶

Something of this sort that she claims to know is: “*that I shall not find that pot of coffee at my elbow too hot to drink.*”⁷

As my title indicates, what I propose to address in these pages is not the issue of knowledge as bearing only on the necessary. I address, rather, the underlying matter of the relation between our two thinkers’ very conceptions of “the necessary,” particularly with respect to temporal events. This relation is both complex and, I believe, philosophically interesting. In the rest of this introduction I shall try to give some sense of its complexity.

Now Anscombe is quite correct to say that St Thomas confines human knowledge to what is necessary. If he does allow for knowledge in the domain of contingent things, such as sensible objects or human actions, it is only to the extent that there is some necessity in them.⁸ As for future events, he says that these can be apprehended “with the certainty of knowledge” – as opposed to mere “conjecture” – only insofar as they are in their present causes in such a way as to issue from them necessarily.⁹ These would be causes that are both sufficiently powerful to yield the events and fully inclined to do so, and that either cannot be impeded, or at least are not in fact impeded in the particular case in question.¹⁰ For Thomas, the movements of the heavens would be examples of the first type; he thinks their causes cannot be impeded.¹¹ Anscombe’s pot of coffee would seem to be a good example of the second type. But she is saying that Thomas cannot be consistent in holding that such things are necessary and can be known. For he must hold that God, at least, could “tamper” with the causes. I suppose she is referring to his teaching that God can bring about whatever does not involve a contradiction (*ST* I, q. 25, a. 3). Is there any contradiction in, for example, the sun’s not rising tomorrow or in the coffee’s being found too hot to drink after all?

I do not think Thomas would say that there is. But neither would he have to acknowledge any inconsistency in his views. This is because in speaking of a cause whose future effect is “necessary,” he does not mean that its failing to yield the effect is “inconceivable.” As I shall explain in section four, what he has in mind is not “logical” necessity. It is necessity in a different sense.

The striking thing is that Anscombe does not even suspect Thomas of having another notion of necessity. If she did, perhaps she would qualify her criticism. For we should note that even she, after all, is ascribing *some* kind of necessity to the known. The last quotation above says: “It may be that I can conceive circumstances that would prove me wrong; that does not show that I may be wrong.”¹² So in order to prove that she does not “know,” it would suffice to show that she *may* be wrong. One who knows *cannot* be wrong. What she is arguing is that her being wrong, although in some sense impossible, need not be inconceivable, even to herself. But if in some sense she cannot be wrong, then what she holds is something that not only is not, but also in some sense cannot, be otherwise (even if it can be conceived to be); that is, it is somehow necessary.

This is not at all to charge Anscombe herself with inconsistency (though she might have expressed herself more clearly). For her own views on necessity are anything but simple, and elsewhere, in “Causality and Determination,” she explicitly holds for a type of “non-logical” necessity – causal necessity.¹³ However, I do not think it is quite the same as Thomas’s non-logical causal necessity. For Thomas’s does seem to be “founded on” the principle of non-contradiction in a way that Anscombe’s does not. Where this contrast is seen most clearly, I believe, is in the case of simultaneous causes and effects – present causes of *present* events. I discuss all of this in section five.

So, I shall not be arguing that Anscombe’s criticism of Thomas on knowledge involves only a misinterpretation and no real disagreement. But with respect to the doctrine of necessity, the misinterpretation itself is interesting. Given the intricacies in Anscombe’s own views on necessity, her failure to appreciate those in Thomas’s is surprising. My suspicion is that this failure is connected with a no less surprising number of differences in their interpretations of Aristotle – which both are quite eager to get right – on the necessity (or necessities) found in temporal events. I think these differences can help to explain why Thomas’s conception of the necessity enjoyed by future events in their present causes escapes Anscombe. For he gets (or at least thinks he gets) this conception from Aristotle, and it is precisely with regard to future events that their readings of Aristotle differ most sharply. Exploring these differences (in sections two and four) will also help show the contrast that, I think, exists between Anscombe and Thomas on causal necessity (section five). There, however, the decisive factor will not be the interpretation of Aristotle, but the influence of Hume.

2. Anscombe on Aristotle on Necessity in Temporal Events

As is well known, Anscombe’s reading of Aristotle’s treatment of truth and falsity, as found in her statements about future contingent events, is “unorthodox.”¹⁴ On

the standard interpretation, Aristotle considers such statements to be indeterminate as to truth and falsity. Anscombe rejects this.¹⁵ As she reads him, the difference between future-contingent statements and statements about past or present contingents is not that the former are indeterminate as to truth and falsity. It is that the truth or falsity belonging to them is not necessary. For instance, if a coat was torn yesterday, then it is now impossible for it not to have been torn yesterday; and so the statement that it was torn is not only true but also necessarily true. But if two days ago someone said that it would be torn the next day, this was merely true; it was not necessarily true. For two days ago it was still possible for the coat to remain intact throughout the next day – even though in fact it would not.

Anscombe judges that contemporary philosophers must find such talk strange. The meanings that Aristotle is giving to “necessary,” “possible” and “impossible” are not the usual ones.¹⁶ He is certainly not talking about “truth-table” necessity, the necessity of what logicians call “tautologies.” Anscombe writes:

Aristotle’s point (as we should put it) is that “Either p or not p” is always necessary: this necessity we are familiar with. But – and this is from our point of view the right way to put it, for this is a novelty to us – that when p describes a present or past situation, then either p is necessarily true, or $\sim p$ is necessarily true; and here “necessarily true” has a sense which is unfamiliar to us. In this sense I say it is necessarily true that there was not – or necessarily false that there was – a big civil war raging in England from 1850 to 1870; “necessarily true” is not simply the same as “true”; for while it may be true that there will be rain tomorrow, it is not necessarily true.¹⁷

Corresponding to this sense of “necessary” is an unfamiliar sense of “possible”:

“What can happen to this coat” is a phrase introducing a special sense of “can” of which this sense of “necessity” – in which everything true about the present and past is not merely true but necessary – is the correlate. “This coat can get torn” states something other than that “This coat will be torn” is a logical possibility – that is, is not self-contradictory. For “This coat did get torn yesterday” is not self-contradictory, but what it says, namely that the coat got torn on a certain date, cannot now come about if, as is indicated by the past tense, we are already past that date.¹⁸

She suggests that “we have here the starting-point for the development of Aristotle’s notion of potentiality.”¹⁹

Anscombe also offers an interesting way of getting at these meanings of “necessary” and “possible.” She relates them to the concept of “determination.” The move seems fitting, since the *De interpretatione* discussion is aimed at avoiding what we call “determinism” in future events:

But he [Aristotle] erects a special concept of “necessity” according to which what is happening or has happened is “necessary” – one cannot determine what is already determined, any more than one can make what is already there – whereas one can determine what will be by deliberation and choice.²⁰

Of course this “determination” of past and present events is not *pre*-determination. In her famous lecture, “Causality and Determination,” Anscombe describes pre-determination as follows:

When we call a result determined we are implicitly relating it to an antecedent range of possibilities and saying that all but one of these is disallowed. What disallows them is not the result itself but something antecedent to the result. The antecedences may be logical or temporal or in the order of knowledge. Of the many – antecedent – possibilities, *now* only one is – antecedently – possible.²¹

She then anticipates what seems to be a possible objection to this description:

It might be said that anything was determined once it had happened. There is now no possibility open: it *has* taken place! It was in this sense that Aristotle said that past and present were necessary. But this does not concern us: what interests us is *pre*-determination.²²

I take it that difference between pre-determination and the determination of any past or present event would be that what determines the latter – what “disallows” the other possibilities – is precisely the “result itself,” the very occurrence of the event. The “other possibilities” are at least logical possibilities; and in the case of a past or present *contingent* event, they *were* also “real” possibilities, *prior* to the occurrence of the event. There was “potentiality” for them to occur. But the occurrence of the event eliminates this potentiality, at least with respect to the time of the occurrence. It is in this sense that at that time, the alternatives become impossible. The idea of their occurrence at that time does not become self-contradictory, but there is no longer potentiality for them to occur at that time. And there never will be.

“One cannot determine what is already determined.”²³ This would be why past and present seem “unchangeable” in a way that the future does not – even though in some sense the future is too.

If someone said: “The future cannot change, for if it is true that something is going to happen then it is going to happen”, this would seem perfectly empty. Similarly “If it is true that something has happened, then it has happened” is empty. “But”, it may be said, “there is a difference between the past and future which shows what is meant by ‘the past cannot change’”. If something is going to happen, it is going to happen; but a change does come about precisely when it does happen. When it has happened it is no longer going to happen. Thus the future changes in just that sense in which we say that the past can’t change.” To say this is to regard the happening of an event as an irreversible change that takes place in it, and fixes its character.²⁴

Prior to its happening, the event’s character was not “fixed,” not determined; once it happens, it is. This is what makes the past’s not changing “so absolute a necessity,” and what therefore seems to explain why the idea of a change in the past is “nonsensical.”²⁵

Let me sum up what we have seen so far. The necessity of “if it is true that something is going to happen then it is going to happen” presents Aristotle with an argument for determinism. What Anscombe takes his refutation to consist in is not the denial of the antecedent (“it is not true – though neither is it false”), but in the distinction between this merely conditional necessity and the “so absolute” necessity belonging to the already determined events of the past and the present. The latter necessity, although “absolute,” is not “truth-table” necessity. It is not the necessity of something whose opposite is self-contradictory, but that of something of which there is no longer any potentiality for the opposite.

Now, in Aristotle’s cosmology, not all future events are contingent. Some are necessary, because they are *pre*-determined. Such are the future movements of the heavenly bodies. Potentiality for their opposites *never* existed. This is because their “determinant” is not their mere occurrence, but the very nature of things. But evidently, on Anscombe’s reading, this difference is incidental to the type of necessity involved. It is the same necessity as that which belongs to past and present contingent events – the necessity that is the correlate of the special sense of “can” in “what can happen to this coat.” A remark of hers on Aristotle’s doctrine of the heavens brings out another important point about how she understands this necessity. She is glossing a passage in the *De interpretatione* where Aristotle explicitly distinguishes between two types of necessity (*De interpretatione*, ch. 9, 19a23–25). One type is expressed thus: that which is, at the time when it is, necessarily is. This would be the necessity applying commonly to what was, at the time when it was; to what is, at the time when it is; and to what will be, at the time when it will be. It is mere “truth-table” necessity. But for a thing to be necessary in this way, Aristotle says, is not the same as for it “simply to be of necessity.” Anscombe remarks:

there is a temptation to recognize what we are used to under the title “logical necessity” in this phrase. Wrongly, though: Aristotle thought that the heavenly bodies and their movements were necessary in this sense. On the other hand, he seems to have ascribed something like logical necessity to them²⁶

The situation is certainly complex. Having contrasted the necessity of past and present, and now the necessity of the heavenly bodies and their movements, with “truth-table” or “familiar” logical necessity, Anscombe tells us that it is still “something like” logical necessity. Perhaps she does so because Aristotle speaks of it as necessity “simply.” It is “unqualified” or “absolute” necessity. For a moment ago we saw that she speaks of the necessity of past or present events as “absolute,” and she connects this with the fact that the idea of their changing or being otherwise is “nonsensical.”

So her thought seems to be this. Past and present events, insofar as they are understood to have been or to be, and so already determined to have been or to be, cannot be conceived not to have been or to be. And similarly – granting Aristotle’s cosmology – insofar as the heavenly bodies are understood to be determined, this time “by nature,” to exist forever and to continue moving just as they do, they and

their movements cannot be conceived not to be going to be. None of these items is such that its negation is self-contradictory; this is why the necessity is not of the “truth-table” sort. But the “determinant” excludes the potential for the negation, and thereby excludes the negation itself. And this exclusion too is in some way “logical.” Insofar as something is understood to have no potential for some feature, it cannot be understood to have the feature itself. There would be some kind of contradiction. Perhaps she would call it “generously conceived.”²⁷

This reading of Aristotle certainly fits with what we saw at the beginning about how Anscombe understands the “Greek” conception of knowledge. Aristotle thinks he *knows* that the heavenly bodies will go on existing and moving as they do forever.²⁸ As Anscombe understands it, this must mean that he thinks that for one who has grasped the matter, their doing otherwise is inconceivable.

Why then does she not criticize Aristotle on this point, as she does Thomas? A reason is not hard to guess. Aristotle, it is commonly said, has no notion of *creatio ex nihilo* or of an *omnipotent* deity; for the Greeks, a power capable of “tampering” with the very order of the world would indeed have been “inconceivable.” But for a Christian such as Thomas it certainly is not. In relation to such a power, everything in the world must be “radically contingent.” If Thomas still speaks of necessary causes, this only shows how strong the Greek influence upon him was. Or so a very widespread view has it.²⁹ I hope we will see that it does not really do him justice.

3. Thomas on Aristotle on the Necessity of Past and Present Events

Thomas’s reading of the *De interpretatione* on future-contingent statements is along the traditional lines (*In Peri.* I, lects. 13–15). He takes Aristotle to be saying that such statements are indeterminate with respect to truth and falsity.³⁰ As a result, he can see the necessity of all past and present events as nothing but the application, in each case, of the general principle that during the time of a thing’s being, its being is necessary. What is or was, at the time when it is or was, necessarily is or was.³¹

Of course, even when put in the future tense, the general principle still holds: what will be, at the time when it will be, necessarily will be. This is why Anscombe thinks that the necessity of past and present lies somewhere else. But for Thomas, the indeterminacy of future-contingent statements means that in their case, the principle remains as it were suspended in generality. It has no sure application, because the matter is undecided.³² To say that “tomorrow’s sea-battle, at the time when it will be, necessarily will be,” is to suppose that it will be; and this is just what cannot (truly) be supposed (or denied). There may be no such thing as “the time when tomorrow’s sea-battle will be.” Hence there may be no such thing as a sea-battle that will be necessary tomorrow.³³

And so the necessity that Thomas ascribes to past and present contingent events turns out to be ordinary “truth-table” necessity, the necessity of the principle of non-contradiction. At the same time, he readily acknowledges that the negation of a past or present contingent event, considered just for what it is, is not

self-contradictory. The negation *by itself* is not impossible. It is only impossible “on a supposition” or “*per accidens*.”³⁴ To use his example: that Socrates run or not run is contingent (*QDP* q. 1, a. 3, ad 9). Socrates’ not running is not, by itself, inconceivable. But if he did run at some time, then his not having run at that time would “plainly imply a contradiction.” The necessity by which what is, at the time when it is, necessarily is, is only necessity on a supposition³⁵ – viz., the supposition that it is; but it is still logical necessity.

So this is one difference from Anscombe’s account of the necessity of such events: whereas she speaks of a different *type* of necessity from that of “not both *p* and $\sim p$,” Thomas regards it as the same type. He simply distinguishes between what has such necessity by itself, and what has it only on a supposition. This is not to say that he would reject the language of “determination”:

Something contingent can be taken in two ways. In one way, in itself, insofar as it is already in act. And in this way it is not considered as future, but as present, nor as contingent between opposites, but as determined to one. ... In the other way, the contingent can be considered as it is in its cause. And thus it is considered as future, and as contingent, not yet determined to one; because a contingent cause is open to opposites.³⁶

However, I do not think that Thomas would say that the determination of past and present events consists in the fact that the potentiality for their opposites has been eliminated. Especially pertinent here is a passage from his commentary on Aristotle’s *De caelo* (*In De caelo* I, lect. 26). The passage concerns a portion of Aristotle’s efforts to defend the following two-part thesis: what is incorruptible cannot have been generated, and what is ungenerated cannot be corruptible. One of Aristotle’s arguments for this, as Thomas reports it, is that what is generated has matter with potency both to be and not to be, and so it is contingent and cannot be incorruptible; and likewise, what is ungenerated has only potency to be and no potency not to be, and so it is necessary and cannot be corruptible.³⁷ Further on, a rather strange counter-argument is entertained and rebutted (*In De caelo* I, lect. 29, para. 10). It says that what is incorruptible and generated would indeed have potency to be and not to be – but solely with respect to the past, not the future; and likewise, what is ungenerated and corruptible would have (only) potency to be – but again, solely with respect to the past, not the future. The gist of Aristotle’s reply, according to Thomas, is simply that the past cannot be present or future, and that “potency” is solely for the present or the future. And so it makes no sense to say that what is corruptible has potency always to have been or that what is incorruptible has potency to have been and not to have been. It would be like saying that I now have the power to have walked yesterday. Even if I did walk yesterday, what I have the power for can only be to walk now or in the future; and yesterday cannot be now or future.

What Thomas means by “potency” here is clearly something quite distinct from “logical” possibility.³⁸ For he is saying not only that what is incorruptible has no potency not to have been, but also that it does not have potency to have been – even

when it *was*. Obviously, if something was, then it is “logically” possible for it to have been – there is no contradiction. But “potency” just does not regard the past.

Now if there is not even any such thing as potency for what *did* happen, let alone for what did not, then clearly the necessity of what did happen cannot properly consist in the mere absence of the potency for its not happening. The necessity of what is past is, as it were, *only* a logical necessity. It is not a question of potency at all.

The distinction between potency and logical possibility comes out even more sharply in what follows (*In De caelo* I, lect. 29, para. 12). Thomas observes that this discussion is in no way incompatible with the fact that all creatures had a temporal beginning, before which they were not, and that nonetheless some of them are incorruptible and necessary. (These would be the angels, human souls and the heavenly bodies.) Such a creature has no potency not to be.³⁹ But this does not entail that it always was; for it only has its potency once it is, and its potency does not regard the past.⁴⁰ So it is “possible” for something incorruptible and necessary – something without any potency not to be – not to have been. It is logically possible, free of contradiction.⁴¹

What about the present? Thomas says that potency only regards the future *or* the present. What someone is doing now is something that he now has potency to do, and to do now. But does the necessity of his doing it now consist in the fact that he now has no potency *not* to do it now? An earlier passage from the *De caelo* commentary indicates that the answer is negative:

For if I say that you are standing – you who are not standing but sitting – what is said will be false, but not impossible ...; but that someone both stand and sit ... is not only false but also impossible. ... And granted that something simultaneously have a power for opposites (e.g., for sitting and standing), as is shown by the fact that sometimes one potency is reduced to act, and sometimes the other; nevertheless nothing has the potency to have the opposites simultaneously (for instance to sit and stand simultaneously), but this must be at different times.⁴²

Now in saying that your standing now is false but not impossible, Thomas must mean that it is not impossible *by itself*; as we have seen, it is impossible *ex suppositione* or *per accidens* – it is excluded by your sitting. But there is no talk of your sitting’s eliminating your *potency* for standing. It does not need to. Your sitting now excludes your standing now, *whether or not* you have the potency to stand now. The potency for standing does not have to be discarded; the actuality of the sitting simply trumps it. As he says in another place:

The contingent differs from the necessary insofar as each is in its cause; for the contingent is in its cause in such a way that it can be and not be from it, while the necessary cannot but be from its cause. But insofar as each is in itself, it [the contingent] does not differ [from the necessary] in being ...; because in the contingent, insofar as it is in itself, there is not both being and not being, but only being, even though in the future the contingent can not-be.⁴³

So it seems clear that for Thomas, the necessity or “determination” which is *common* to past and present events is something quite different from the mere absence of potency for their opposites. Even in the case of a past event, for whose opposite there is indeed no potency, its necessity does not *consist* in the absence of potency for the opposite, or even in the general impossibility of there being potency for anything past. The necessity of past and present events is simply the result of the impossibility that contradictories ever be true simultaneously.

4. Thomas on Necessary Future Events

The distinction between the possible in the sense of what is free of contradiction, and the possible in the sense of what a thing has potency for, is something that Thomas takes from Aristotle.⁴⁴ Thomas calls the former “absolute” possibility; the latter, “possibility with respect to potency” (*ST I*, q. 25, a. 3). He describes absolute possibility as something pertaining to “logic” (*In Meta.* IX, lect. 1, para. 1775). It is just what we call logical possibility: the possibility of a proposition’s being true, the compatibility of subject and predicate. Some of Thomas’s examples show that the logically impossible includes not only straightforward contradictions (“thus and not thus”), but also Anscombe’s “contradiction generously conceived.”⁴⁵

In saying that absolute possibility pertains to “logic,” Thomas obviously does not mean that it does not have application to “real” things. It does, because there is truth and falsity about real things. But whereas absolute possibility and impossibility extend to every object about which there can be propositions; possibility and impossibility “with respect to potency” pertain *only* to real things; that is, to things that can act or be acted upon.⁴⁶ For a “potency” is a principle either of acting (active potency) or of being acted upon (passive potency). Thomas in fact says that this sense of “possible” and “impossible” – “what an agent or patient is or is not capable of” – is the one that “most befits” natural things.⁴⁷

Now “necessary” means “impossible to be otherwise” or “impossible not to be.” However, in order to understand Thomas’s doctrine of necessity, and especially the necessity that he attributes to natural things such as the heavens and their movements, it is important to notice that the terms he uses to distinguish types of necessity do not perfectly correspond to those that he uses for types of possibility and impossibility. Especially liable to cause confusion is his use of the term “absolute.”

Again following Aristotle,⁴⁸ Thomas distinguishes between what is “absolutely” necessary, and what is necessary “on a supposition” or “under a condition.” The former is what is necessary for a thing “taken absolutely,” that is, when considered just according to its own nature. The latter is what is made necessary by some factor extrinsic to its nature, for example, by something acting upon it by force, or by some goal to which it is directed. But thus, “absolutely necessary” is not opposed to “necessary with respect to potency.” For not every potency or lack thereof is something extrinsic to a thing’s nature. Some potencies and impotencies are natural for it. And so what is “absolutely necessary” for a thing *may* be something whose

opposite would involve a contradiction, being incompatible with the thing's existence; but it may also be something for whose opposite there is merely no natural potency in the thing. The latter may not involve any contradiction.

For instance, it is absolutely necessary for human beings to die.⁴⁹ They do not by nature have any potency to live forever. But their living forever would not involve a contradiction. It is not "absolutely impossible," but only "impossible with respect to (natural) potency." God can make them live forever, by giving them a *supernatural* potency to do so.⁵⁰

It is in this way, then, that Thomas interprets the "simple" necessity that Aristotle ascribes to the existence and movements of the heavenly bodies. They are by nature unable to be otherwise, in the sense that they do not by nature have any potency for being otherwise. They are in no way "liable" to stop. But it would not involve any contradiction for them to stop – not even a contradiction of the "generous" sort. It is "absolutely" possible for them to stop. And God can make them stop. Thomas takes quite literally the Scriptural episode in which, in answer to Joshua's prayer, the sun and the moon stood still.⁵¹

Thomas is quite insistent upon the existence of such "absolutely necessary" things in the world. He argues that their necessity is not excluded by the fact that they depend upon God's will and that His will with respect to them is not itself absolutely necessary but free.⁵² Some of Thomas's ascriptions of absolute necessity, of course, can hardly be accepted now; the heavens are not as he thought. There seem to be no absolutely necessary bodies. But this is simply to make universal another absolute necessity, one that he only ascribed to some bodies: the necessity of corrupting. There also remains the absolute necessity of the continuation of the underlying substantial potency in bodies, namely, matter.⁵³ And naturally we should not neglect the spiritual creatures.

There is one other point to notice about how Thomas understands the absolute necessity in creatures. Even though it does not always consist in the necessity of the principle of non-contradiction, it nevertheless rests on that necessity in a certain way. Or rather, in two ways. The first is that if a thing has no natural potency for a feature, then there would be a contradiction in its obtaining that feature by any merely natural operation. A miracle is the only conceivable way for it to happen. One place where Thomas makes this point explicitly is in defense of the thesis that what is impossible for nature is possible for God. An objection to the thesis runs as follows:

Just as everything necessary in nature is demonstrable, so everything impossible in nature is disprovable. But in every conclusion of a demonstration the principles of demonstration are included; and in all principles of demonstration are included this principle, that affirmation and denial are not true together. Hence this principle is included in anything that is impossible for nature. But God cannot make it be that negation and affirmation are true together. ... Therefore he cannot bring about anything that is impossible in nature.⁵⁴

Thomas answers:

In anything impossible, affirmation and negation are implied to be together just insofar as the thing is impossible. But the things that are impossible on account of a lack of natural potency, such as that a blind man become sighted ... are not impossible according to themselves; and so neither do they imply that sort of impossible [i.e. the self-contradictory] according to themselves, but only in comparison with the natural potency with respect to which they are impossible. Thus if we say that nature can make a blind man sighted, the aforesaid sort of impossible [the self-contradictory] is implied, because the potency of nature is terminated (*terminata*) to something that what is being attributed to it exceeds.⁵⁵

The other way in which absolute necessity in creatures rests on the principle of non-contradiction is with respect to their very possession of their natural potencies. There would be a contradiction in their not having them. To be sure, a thing's potencies – for example, the powers of the soul – are not, for Thomas, contained in the thing's very essence or definition; they are "accidents" or "properties." Thus he says that "what the soul is" can be understood without its powers. But as properties, they belong to the soul *per se*: immediately, just by *virtue* of what it is. And hence, he says, "that the soul exist without them is neither possible nor intelligible" (*QDA* a. 12, ad 7). It is in this way that some potency for laughter belongs to man. (This potency is nothing other than the power of reason, considered in relation to the laughable or the funny.) So it seems clear that we are in the domain of what Anscombe calls contradiction "generously conceived."

To conclude this section: the sense in which it is "impossible" that a blind man become sighted, or that a human being live forever, is the sense that "most befits" natural things. Thomas finds this sense in Aristotle. That God can make such things happen does not eliminate the impossibility. Divine omnipotence in no way dissolves the necessities that Aristotle found in the world. Rather, it means that God has power over the necessities themselves. As the universal "cause of being" and of all the "modes" of being, Thomas says, the divine will "transcends the order of necessity and contingency" (*In Peri.* I, lect. 14, para. 22). I am not aware that he ever attributes the complete doctrine of divine omnipotence to Aristotle. On the contrary, he seems to hold that none of the pagans achieved it fully.⁵⁶ He knows the difference between himself and "the Greeks."⁵⁷ But it is no obstacle to his agreeing with Aristotle about the necessities in things. If anything, the agreement only serves to highlight the transcendence of his God.

5. The Necessity of the Present in its Present Causes

Anscombe takes the "absolute" necessity that Aristotle ascribes to the future movements of the heavens to be some kind of logical necessity. Thomas does not. He only sees it as the necessity with which those movements exist in the potency of their present causes.⁵⁸ The failure of such causes is not "absolutely impossible," involving a contradiction. But of course one thing is Anscombe's interpretation of Aristotle, and another is her own philosophy. There is no good reason to think that

she is *accepting* the idea that future events sometimes issue from their present causes with logical necessity; quite the contrary. This, however, is not because she ever denies the existence of any such thing as causal necessity, as the *Tractatus* does.⁵⁹ It is because she does not think that causal necessity is a kind of logical necessity. But although this may seem to put her own views closer to Thomas's, what I want to suggest here is that she takes the dissociation of causal necessity from logical necessity even farther than he does.

Much of Anscombe's discussion in "Causality and Determination" is directed against the idea that causation should be flatly identified with a kind of necessitation. But nowhere does she reject the existence of causal necessity. She simply distinguishes between necessitating and non-necessitating causes. The former would include many physical causes; the latter would include both free agents and physical causes whose causation is what she calls "mere hap."⁶⁰ She explains the distinction between necessitating and non-necessitating causes thus:

a cause *C* is a necessitating cause of an effect *E* *when* (I mean: on the occasions when) if *C* occurs it is certain to cause *E* unless something prevents it. *C* and *E* are to be understood as general expressions, not singular terms. If "certainty" should seem too epistemological a notion: a necessitating cause *C* of a given kind of effect *E* is such that it is not possible (on the occasion) that *C* should occur and should not cause an *E*, given that there is nothing that prevents an *E* from occurring. A non-necessitating cause is then one that can fail of its effect without the intervention of anything to frustrate it.⁶¹

At the same time, both here and elsewhere, Anscombe accepts and gives great importance to Hume's doctrine that the connection between cause and effect is not, in general, a logical one. She does think there might be exceptions to this; she finds it uninteresting to redefine "cause" in such a way as to exclude any logical connection *a priori*.⁶² But she can think of only one exception.⁶³ So she regards Hume's doctrine as a great discovery.

For he made us see that, given any particular cause – or "total causal situation" for that matter – and its effect, there is not in general any contradiction in supposing the one to occur and the other not to occur. That is to say, we'd know what was being described – what it would be like for it to be true – if it were reported for example that a kettle of water was put, and kept, directly on a hot fire, but the water did not heat up.⁶⁴

This would surely be a necessitating cause, not "mere hap." But the necessity is not logical.

Now Thomas certainly does not make the connection between cause and effect to be universally a logical connection. There are "contingent" causes. This is most obvious in the case of present causes of future effects. If the cause is one that can be impeded, he says, its future effect cannot be demonstrated or foreknown with certainty (*In Post.* II, lect. 10, para. 9). And as we have seen, even for a cause that has no "potential" for being impeded – an absolutely necessary cause – the necessity of its future effect is not logical.⁶⁵

But what about a present cause of a present effect? Such causes abound in Thomas's world.⁶⁶ And Anscombe's kettle of water on the fire is an example. The

fire is now causing the water to be heated and the water is now being heated. Granted this is not a case of what Thomas would call an “absolutely” necessary cause; that would mean that no created agent could ever have intervened to impede it. But this is incidental. It is certainly a case of what he would call a “sufficient and unimpeded” cause. Upon such a cause, the effect follows with necessity.⁶⁷ When the effect is also simultaneous with the cause, is the necessity logical?

Anscombe is saying that it is not. Failure is conceivable, even on a complete understanding of what the cause and the effect are.⁶⁸ Especially crucial is her reference to the “total causal situation.” Not even this makes the water’s failure to heat up inconceivable. It is not a matter of imagining some hidden obstacle to the heating.

Now if we were dealing with a future effect, then this would be easy to explain. Whatever the total causal situation is *now*, there would be room for a future impediment to appear, prior to the time when the effect is to occur. But since the effect is simultaneous, this explanation will not work.

Perhaps she is speaking only of the total “physical” causal situation, that is, allowing for the possibility of divine intervention. But how should we conceive that? It must consist entirely in something “in God” – His saying, as it were, “Let the water not heat up this time.” That is, it could not involve, for example, His giving the water some sort of “supernatural potency” to resist being heated.⁶⁹ For then the total causal situation would not be the one being supposed.

The question that then arises is: in *what sense* does the causal situation “necessitate” the water’s heating up? “In such circumstances, water always heats up.” Well, up to now it always has. For Hume, of course, that is all there is to it. The experience of regular association somehow compels us to infer the result from the antecedent, and this is all that we really mean by calling the result “necessary.” Understanding the nature of the antecedent does not reveal anything in it – anything like causal “potency” or “power” – making it such that its existence would be contradicted by the result’s failure. Anscombe is saying that the “necessity” of the result does not have to mean that its failure would involve a contradiction. And so is Hume. But given his denial of causal “power,” is Hume not correct in saying that this “necessity” is not anything *intelligible* at all?

Although I am not entirely sure how Anscombe stands on the question of causal power, my impression is that she is closer to Thomas than to Hume.⁷⁰ But on Thomas’s understanding of it, I believe, there would indeed seem to be a kind of logical connection between cause and effect in a case such as that of the fire and the water. The point is very simple.

Thomas would explain the water’s heating up by the natural passive potency in the water for being heated, the natural active potency in the fire for heating, and the unobstructed contact between the two – the direct application of the fire to the water. Now, being a natural potency,⁷¹ the fire’s active potency to heat also constitutes an *inclination* or a *tendency* to heat. The fire “determines” the water to heat up, and it does so in virtue of its own “determination” to do so.⁷² It is not “open to opposites.” But what does it *mean* to say that the fire is inclined to heat or tends to heat, if not that when it can, and when there is nothing that can obstruct it, it

does?⁷³ I find it very hard to see how its failure could be regarded as even a logical possibility.⁷⁴

But I have to be tentative about this as an interpretation of Thomas. I have not found any place where he explicitly asserts a logical connection between cause and effect for cases such as the unobstructed heating up of water by fire.⁷⁵ One point in its favor, however, is something we saw in the previous section: that a thing's natural potencies belong to it with logical necessity. For Thomas understands this as a causal necessity. In fact he says that the soul is a kind of *active* source of its powers (*STI*, q. 77, a. 6).

At any rate, even if Anscombe does not give us the final word on Hume's "discovery" or on how it stands in relation to Thomas's philosophy, she can certainly be of considerable help in pursuing the questions. I am thinking especially of her work to undo other Humean influences on analytical philosophy; in particular, her refutation of the thesis that "a beginning of existence without a cause" is conceivable.⁷⁶ Perhaps something like the therapy that she employs there would be applicable here as well. And for the interpretation of Thomas, the brilliant notion of "contradiction generously conceived" puts the spotlight on something that it is all too easy to overlook or to take for granted. A better understanding of how it works would seem to be a desideratum for Thomists of all persuasions.

Notes

- 1 See C. F. J. Martin, *Thomas Aquinas. God and Explanations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), xiii and xviii.
- 2 G. E. M. Anscombe, "Necessity and Truth," in *From Parmenides to Wittgenstein. The Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 81–85.
- 3 Anscombe, "Necessity and Truth," 83.
- 4 Anscombe, "Necessity and Truth," 82.
- 5 Anscombe, "Necessity and Truth," 83.
- 6 Anscombe, "Necessity and Truth," 82.
- 7 Anscombe, "Necessity and Truth," 81.
- 8 *STI*, q. 86, a. 3. See *In Meta.* IX, lect. 9, para. 1873; *In Post.* I, lect. 4, para. 5.
- 9 *STI*, q. 86, a. 4. See *In Peri.* I, lect. 14, para. 19.
- 10 See *STI–II*, q. 75, a. 1, obj. 2 and ad 2; also pertinent is *SCG* I, 67, para. 4.
- 11 See *In Peri.* I, lect. 14, para. 9; also *SCG* II.30, para. 15; *In Post.* I, lect. 16, para. 8.
- 12 Anscombe, "Necessity and Truth," 82.
- 13 Anscombe, "Causality and Determination," in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind. The Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 133–47.
- 14 Anscombe, "Aristotle and the Sea Battle: De interpretatione, Chapter IX," in *From Parmenides to Wittgenstein*, 44–56. For a criticism of her reading and a defense of the traditional one, see D. Frede, "The Sea-battle Reconsidered: a Defense of the Traditional Interpretation," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 18 (1985), 31–87.
- 15 Among other things, she takes it to mean that he is denying the Law of the Excluded Middle, which she finds him affirming in the very midst of his treatment of future

- contingents (at 18b18–25). See Anscombe, “Aristotle and the Sea Battle,” 46 (gloss on “Still, it is not open to us, either, to say that neither is true”); Anscombe, “Aristotle,” in G. E. M. Anscombe and P. T. Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961), 1–63, at 7. See also P. T. Geach, *Logic Matters* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1980), 80–81.
- 16 “It is a very common dogma at the present day that there is no sense of ‘necessity’ and ‘possibility’ except ‘logical necessity’ and ‘logical possibility’. It is possible that this dogma, which is in part an effect of the influence of Hume, is also a hangover from the time of the overwhelming influence of the *Tractatus*.” Anscombe, “An Introduction to Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*,” in *Themes in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*. 2nd ed. (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine’s Press, 1971), 80. Here are some pertinent passages from the *Tractatus*. Note that Wittgenstein is especially concerned to eschew “causal” necessity. 5.1361: “We cannot infer the events of the future from those of the present. Superstition is nothing but belief in the causal nexus.” 6.36311: “It is an hypothesis that the sun will rise tomorrow: and this means that we do not know whether it will rise.” 6.3: “The exploration of logic means the exploration of everything that is subject to law. And outside logic everything is accidental.” 6.37: “There is no compulsion making one thing happen because another has happened. The only necessity that exists is logical necessity.” 6.375: “Just as the only necessity that exists is logical necessity, so too the only impossibility that exists is logical impossibility.”
 - 17 Anscombe, “Aristotle and the Sea Battle,” 53.
 - 18 Anscombe, “Aristotle,” 7.
 - 19 Anscombe, “Aristotle and the Sea Battle,” 48.
 - 20 Anscombe, “Aristotle,” 7.
 - 21 Anscombe, “Causality and Determination,” 141.
 - 22 Anscombe, “Causality and Determination,” 141.
 - 23 Anscombe, “Aristotle,” 7.
 - 24 Anscombe, “The Reality of the Past,” in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, 103–19.
 - 25 Anscombe, “The Reality of the Past,” 113.
 - 26 Anscombe, “Aristotle and the Sea Battle,” 49.
 - 27 See the reference to the full quotation as cited earlier in note 5.
 - 28 “Therefore, the sun and the stars and the whole heaven are ever active, and there is no fear that they may sometime stand still, as the natural philosophers fear they may.” (*Metaphysics* IX.8, 1050b23–25, W. D. Ross, trans.)
 - 29 One finds something like it even among some self-professed Thomists (though they may seek a way to avoid the charge of inconsistency). For good clarifications of the matter see P. Brown, “St. Thomas’ Doctrine of Necessary Being,” *The Philosophical Review* 73 (1964), 76–90; L. Dewan, “St. Thomas, Aristotle, and Creation,” *Dionysius* 15 (1991), 81–90; Dewan, “Thomas Aquinas, Creation, and Two Historians,” *Laval théologique et philosophique* 50 (1994), 363–87.
 - 30 See also *ST* II–II, q. 171, a. 3, where he speaks of “future contingents, of which the truth is not determinate.” It does not seem to me that Thomas thinks this amounts to a denial of the Law of the Excluded Middle. (Indeed he affirms it just a little earlier in the commentary: *In Peri.* I, lect. 11, para. 7. See also *In Peri.* lect. 15, para. 3, on 18b18–25. At *In Meta.* X, lect. 9, para. 6, he says “*contradictio nullum habet medium*.”) What suggests this is the very word “indeterminate.” The only possible determinations of a proposition are “true” and “false;” “indeterminate” is not another determination. It is not a third “truth-value” but simply the lack of a value. In other words, if “true” and

“false” in propositions are like “won” and “lost” in baseball, “indeterminate” is not like “tied” (there is no such outcome in baseball); it is like “suspended.” Or again, true and false are like two decisions: “decided for” and “decided against.” “Undecided” may also be a possibility, but it is not another possible *decision*. If we are capable of simply withholding judgment about a proposition, neither affirming or denying it, is it inconceivable that a proposition be in itself neither fit to affirm (true) nor fit to deny (false)? Still, one might object that conjunctions and disjunctions of propositions are truth-functions of their component propositions (cf. Geach, *Logic Matters*, 195–96). The conjunction of any pair of contradictories is determinately false, and their disjunction is determinately true; so how can the contradictories themselves ever be indeterminate? But this question raises another one: is it true that a conjunction or disjunction of *contradictories*, as opposed to just any random pair of propositions, is a truth-function of its components? Why must it be, if we can *know* that the conjunction is false, and that the disjunction is true, without knowing the truth-value of either component?

31 See *SCG* II, 25, para. 15; *In Eth.* VI, lect. 2, para. 1139.

32 See *ST* I, q. 10, a. 5, ad 3.

33 On Anscombe’s reading, if there is a sea-battle today, then yesterday it was true that there would be, and so there definitely was such a thing as a sea-battle that would be necessary today; but determinism is avoided by the fact that the necessity did not exist until today. See Anscombe, “Aristotle and the Sea Battle,” 56.

34 Thomas is not being original on this. The first to speak of the past as necessary “*per accidens*” seems to have been William of Sherwood (ca. 1200–70); see N. Kretzmann, *William of Sherwood’s Introduction to Logic*, (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 41. Thomas uses this expression, for example, in *QDP* q. 1, a. 3, ad 9 and in *ST* I, q. 25, a. 1, obj. 4 and ad 4. In other places he uses “*ex suppositione*”, for example, *ST* I, q. 10, a. 5, ad 3; *ST* I, q. 19, a. 3; *In Peri.* I, lect. 15, para. 2.

35 *In Peri.* I, lect. 15, para. 2.

36 “Contingens aliquod dupliciter potest considerari. Uno modo, in seipso, secundum quod iam actu est. Et sic non consideratur ut futurum, sed ut praesens, neque ut ad utrumlibet contingens, sed ut determinatum ad unum Alio modo potest considerari contingens, ut est in sua causa. Et sic consideratur ut futurum, et ut contingens nondum determinatum ad unum, quia causa contingens se habet ad oppositum.” *ST* I, q. 14, a. 13.

37 *In De caelo* I, lect. 26, paras. 5–7. From here on I shall use the word “potency” rather than “potentiality,” since Thomas’s *potentia* covers not only passive principles such as matter, but also active ones (“powers”); it seems to me that “potentiality” rather suggests something passive.

38 See *In De caelo* I, lect. 25, para. 3.

39 See *ST* I, q. 9, a. 2. Note that potency is not always “two-way”: see *In Meta.* IX, lect. 2; also lect. 9, para. 1878.

40 See *ST* I, q. 46, a. 1, ad 2.

41 “Taken without qualification, it is not in itself impossible, as though implying a contradiction, that creatures not exist; otherwise they would have existed from eternity.” *QDP* q. 5, a. 3; see also ad 8.

42 “Si enim dicam te stare, qui non stas sed sedes, falsum erit quod dicitur, non autem impossibile sed quod aliquis simul stet et sedeat ... non solum est falsum, sed et impossibile Et ... licet aliquid simul habeat virtutem ad opposita (puta ad sedere et stare), tali ratione, quia quandoque una potentia reducitur in actum, quandoque altera; nihil tamen hanc habet potentiam ut simul habeat opposita (puta ut simul sedeat et stet), sed oportet hoc in alio et alio tempore esse.” *In De caelo* lect. 26, para. 4.

- 43 “Contingens a necessario differt secundum quod unumquodque in sua causa est: contingens enim sic in sua causa est ut non esse ex ea possit et esse; necessarium vero non potest ex sua causa nisi esse. Secundum id vero quod utrumque eorum in se est, non differt quantum ad esse, supra quod fundatur verum: quia in contingenti, secundum id quod in se est, non est esse et non esse, sed solum esse, licet in futurum contingens possit non esse.” *SCG* I, 67, para. 3.
- 44 *In Meta.* V, lect. 14, para. 971; IX, lect. 1, paras. 1773–5; *In De caelo* I, lect. 25, para. 3. Cf. *ST* I, q. 25, a. 3.
- 45 See *SCG* II.25, para. 14; *In Meta.* V, lect. 14, para. 971.
- 46 Thomas connects the two senses by way of the connection between two senses of “being.” “Cum enim posse dicatur in ordine ad esse, sicut ens dicitur non solum quod est in rerum natura, sed secundum compositionem propositionis, prout est in ea verum vel falsum; ita possibile et impossibile dicitur non solum propter potentiam vel impotentiam rei: sed propter veritatem et falsitatem compositionis vel divisionis in propositionibus.” *In Meta.* V, lect. 14, para. 971.
- 47 “... quod aliquod agens aut patiens potest aut non potest: haec enim significatio maxime congruit rebus naturalibus.” *In De caelo* I, lect. 25, para. 3.
- 48 See *In Meta.* V, lect. 6, paras. 833–5. Also *In Phys.* II, lect. 15, para. 270; *ST* I, q. 82, a. 1; III, q. 14, a. 2; *SCG* II, 28, para. 16; II.30, para. 15.
- 49 See *ST* I, q. 82, a. 1.
- 50 See *ST* I, q. 97, a. 1.
- 51 Joshua 10:12–14. See *ST* I, q. 105, a. 8; II–II, q. 178, a. 1, ad 1.
- 52 See especially *SCG* II, 30.
- 53 See *ST* I, q. 84, a. 1, ad 3.
- 54 “Sicut omne in natura necessarium est demonstrabile, ita omne impossibile in natura, est improbable per demonstrationem. Sed in omni conclusione demonstrationis includuntur demonstrationis principia; in omnibus autem demonstrationis principiis includitur hoc principium, quod affirmatio et negatio non sunt simul vera. Ergo istud principium includitur in quolibet impossibili naturae. Sed Deus non potest facere quod negatio et affirmatio sint simul vera, ut respondens dicebat. Ergo nullum impossibile in natura potest facere.” *QDP* q. 1, a. 3, obj. 2.
- 55 “In quolibet impossibili implicatur affirmationem et negationem esse simul secundum hoc quod est impossibile; sed ea quae sunt impossibilia propter defectum potentiae naturalis, ut caecum, videntem fieri, vel aliquid huiusmodi, cum non sint impossibilia secundum se ipsa, non implicant huiusmodi impossibile secundum se ipsa, sed per comparisonem ad potentiam naturalem cui sunt impossibilia, ut si dicamus, natura potest facere caecum videntem, implicatur praedictum impossibile, quia naturae potentia est terminata ad aliquid, ultra quod est id quod ei attribuitur.” *QDP* q. 1, a. 3, ad 2. A similar discussion, this time concerning whether God can annihilate the rational soul, is found a little later in *QDP* q. 5, a. 3, ad 7.
- 56 See *ST* II–II, q. 1, a. 8, ad 1.
- 57 On the other hand, though, I wonder whether he would agree that for Aristotle, the suspension of natural necessities, for example, the cessation of the heavenly movements, must have been altogether inconceivable. What I have in mind is a brief passage from the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle is arguing, as part of his polemic against platonic ideas, that singulars cannot be defined. He notes that some thinkers have tried to define the sun. They do it badly, he says, because they add “attributes after whose removal the sun would still exist, for example, ‘going around the earth’ or ‘night-hidden’ (for from their view it follows that if it stands still or is visible, it will no longer

- be the sun; but it is strange if this is so; for 'the sun' means a certain *substance*)." *Metaphysics* VII.15, 1040a31–34, W. D. Ross, trans) The sun's not moving as it does, seems to be quite "conceivable" to Aristotle.
- 58 See *In Peri.* I, lect. 14, para. 9.
- 59 See note 16.
- 60 Anscombe, "Causality and Determination," 144–46.
- 61 Anscombe, "Causality and Determination," 144.
- 62 Anscombe, "Times, Beginnings and Causes," in *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*, 148–62.
- 63 The exception is that traveling from point A to point B is a cause of being at point B, and it also logically entails being at point B, at least for a moment. See her "Whatever has a Beginning of Existence must have a Cause," in *From Parmenides to Wittgenstein*, 93; "Times, Beginnings and Causes," 150–51.
- 64 Anscombe, "Causality and Determination," 134.
- 65 In relation to Hume, for whom indeed causality is *entirely* a matter of temporal succession, this is surely an important point. That *successive* causes and effects are not logically connected is hardly a "discovery" of his.
- 66 He even seems to hold that successive causality always has simultaneous causality associated with it: *In Post.* II, lect. 10, para. 2.
- 67 See *ST I–II* q. 75, a. 1, obj. 2 and ad 2; also pertinent is *SCG* I, 67, para. 4.
- 68 "Is it [Hume's thesis] to be taken as saying only that a rudimentary understanding of the objects which are causes and effects will never yield a necessary connection? That so long as we remain ignorant of the nature of things, we will find no logic in the sequence of events? That would not be too impressive. A proper physical statement of the cause will never logically yield a proper physical statement of the effect – that is the thesis." Anscombe, "Times, Beginnings and Causes," 150.
- 69 See *ST I*, q. 97, a. 1.
- 70 See notes 72 and 73.
- 71 As opposed to a rational one: see *In Meta.* IX, lect. 2; lect. 4, paras. 1818–21.
- 72 On the cause as "determining" to the effect, see *QDP* q. 5, a. 3, obj. 5: "manente causa, necesse est permanere causatum. Si enim non est necesse, possibile erit causatum esse et non esse, posita causa. Et sic indigebitur alio quo causatum ad esse determinetur; et ita causa sufficiens non erit ad esse causati."
- 73 "To say that something has a tendency to move is precisely to say that unless something interferes, it will move." A. Kenny, *The Five Ways* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 18. Anscombe certainly recognizes that ascribing agency to something goes hand in hand with ascribing tendency to it. In fact she writes in support of "the argument of Aquinas that if there isn't something determinate that an agent does, it will not do one thing rather than another. Or again, that what is indifferent between just any outcomes does not *produce* one rather than the other." Her "Embryos and Final Causes," in *Finalité et intentionnalité: doctrine thomiste et perspectives modernes*, J. Follon and J. McEvoy, eds. (Louvain-la-Neuve: Editions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1992), 293–303 at 301.
- 74 Anscombe writes: "It is true that causal properties enter into the definition of substances, so that you might think certain effects resulted of necessity – logical necessity – from the interaction of substances. But you would be wrong in making this inference. A *lusus naturae* is always logically possible. A different melting point may indeed prove this isn't phosphorus; the lump of phosphorus turning into a little bird or a piece of bread would not." Her "Times, Beginnings and Causes," 151. This may be so,

but the question is whether the phosphorus's turning into a little bird *under the very same conditions* in which it naturally melts is logically possible.

- 75 Cajetan does: he acknowledges that if a non-free cause is sufficient and not impeded, "it cannot be understood that the effect not follow." See his commentary on *ST* I, q. 115, a. 6, sects. IV–V; in the Leonine edition, at 548.
- 76 "Whatever has a Beginning" & "Times, Beginnings and Causes."

Afterword

Analytical Thomism: How We Got Here, Why It Is Worth Remaining and Where We May Go to Next

John Haldane

I

Anyone who has arrived at this point, having read the preceding chapters, will have a sense of the many relationships that exist between the themes that have been explored, the styles of exploration and the ideas that have been invoked or rejected. For my own part I regard this set of essays as a very useful resource for thinking about particular issues under discussion, and for reflecting upon the broader themes of how the idea of “analytical Thomism” might be conceived, what challenges it faces, and what prospects it offers. I am grateful to the editors for conceiving the idea of the volume and for realizing it.

Most of the particular issues discussed fall broadly within metaphysics, belonging either to general ontology, or to some area in which entities and the relations between them enter directly into more specific spheres or structures. Primary among the general metaphysical issues under discussion is that of existence or being *per se* (see Knasas and Pugh (but also Braine, Cahalan, Shanley and Theron)). Beyond that lie issues having to do with the existence and nature of God (Braine, Healy, Putnam and Ramsay); with causality, change and modality (De Anna, Oderberg and Brock); with intentionality and mental reference (Boulter, Cahalan and Lisska); and with action and ethics (Davenport and Paterson). Alongside these discussions, and sometimes interwoven with them, are general reflections on, and occasional objections to the sort of interplay between intellectual traditions that the idea of “analytical Thomism” seems intended to call for (see especially Cahalan, Knasas, Putnam, Shanley and Theron).

This is not the occasion to engage the many, particular metaphysical issues, though I do want to offer some brief comments on what I believe to be a useful way of approaching them.¹ Likewise, I cannot begin to cover the large questions, in part historical, in part philosophical, and in part theological surrounding (a) Thomism, (b) analytical philosophy and (c) the relations between them.² Again, however, I do want to offer some thoughts on how these issues might now be approached.

II

In view of the fact that this collection has its origins in reactions to a general idea represented by a particular expression that features in its title, “analytical Thomism,” and since there is some uncertainty about what is intended by that expression and when it emerged, it may be useful for me to say something here about the source of this. Whatever the merits and demerits of the term and the ideas it was intended to gather, I am at least in a good position to comment on their origins, since I was, I believe, the first to use the expression, coining it deliberately for a specific occasion.

More than one of the contributors to this volume refers to a 1997 issue of the *Monist* edited by me and bearing the title “*Analytical Thomism*.”³ Two of the essays included here (those of Hilary Putnam and of Stephen Theron) were first published in that issue, and one (that of Brian Shanley) was a review of it published shortly thereafter. The protocol of the *Monist* is that issues generally do not feature editorial introductions, but it was agreed between the general editor and myself that in view of the unfamiliarity of the expression and the unusualness of the combination of approaches (analytical and Thomistic) it would be appropriate to have some brief “prefatory note” that would help set the scene for the essays.

This “note” has come in for more attention than I expected and it hardly bears the scrutiny, or the interpretations, that some have given it. When it has been quoted this has generally been in a context that is questioning or sceptical of the very idea of “analytical Thomism”. Interestingly, such attitudes are usually to be found on the “Thomist” rather than the “analytical” side, and express an understandable sensitivity to the idea that Thomism might be being judged, or appropriated by styles of thought that are uncomprehending of or unsympathetic to its deepest commitments.⁴ Given the widespread separation of philosophical speculation from theology, the marginalization of theistic thought within metaphysics, and indeed the common disparaging of metaphysics itself, together with an increasing disregard for the history of speculative thought – all of which *were* features of academic philosophy in the English-speaking world from the 1930s to the 1970s – it is unsurprising that thinkers formed within a long tradition of theologically-shaped metaphysics should react with some doubts to the announcement from the “other side” that there was much to be gained from cooperation.

Rather than being the occasion of that announcement, however, the *Monist* issue represented a fruit of seeds sown earlier which themselves had been gathered from older fruits cultivated by others. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, published in 1995, carries a short entry on “Analytical Thomism” in which I describe it as “A broad philosophical approach that brings into mutual relationship the styles and preoccupations of recent English-speaking philosophy and the concepts and concerns shared by Aquinas and his followers.”⁵ I then wrote that “the expression ‘analytical Thomism’ is rarely employed, but it usefully identifies aspects of the writings of philosophers such as Anscombe, Donagan, Geach, Grisez, Kenny and MacIntyre.” That combination of intensive and ostensive definition was loose but it reflected something that others already had a sense of, tracing it rightly to the

originating influence of Peter Geach, in particular his writings on metaphysics, philosophical theology and ethics.

Prior to that I had occasionally used the expression in discussions of issues in metaphysics and philosophy of mind, but it was first introduced with specific programmatic intent in a pair of lectures, entitled *Understanding Minds* and *Structuring Natures* and concerned with intentionality and the intelligibility of reality, delivered at the University of Notre Dame in September 1992. It is relevant here to quote at length from the introduction to those lectures:

So far as I know, the expression “Analytical Thomism” is a novel one, though as it suggests and as will become clear, the ideas I want to propose for consideration under this heading owe their inspiration to a long-standing tradition. It may well be, then, that the only original element in these texts is their title. ...

“Analytical Thomism” is, of course, a term of art. First, then, I need to explain what I mean by it and what its use is intended to recommend. Sometimes writers use the term “Thomism” at other times they favour “Thomistic.” It would have been useful if one of these were reserved for the ascription of ideas to St Thomas himself, and the other for ways of thinking that are in the spirit of Aquinas, or develop what he has to say. ... [A]s I am using the term I mean by it ideas and styles of thought that derive from St Thomas but are not necessarily employed by him and which he might even have some difficulty comprehending. I am sure that would certainly be true of the “Transcendental Thomism” of the nineteenth century, and I think it is also likely to be so in respect of some ideas introduced by the major Thomist commentators. Here I have in mind “modern” scholastics such as John of St Thomas whom I shall mention again later.

By “Analytical” I mean to refer to a range of related features that have characterized English-speaking philosophy since Russell and Moore began the attack on idealism at the turn of the century; and also to a set of problems and styles of treatment of them. Analytical philosophy is not the same as linguistic philosophy, though in the middle of the century it included it. For while the former may attend to linguistic formulations, and even hold, as with Michael Dummett, that philosophy of language is the heart, or perhaps even the entire body, of philosophy, it need not be committed to the idea, characteristic of much “linguistic” analysis, that philosophical problems arise from a misunderstanding of what Wittgenstein called “grammar.” Analytical philosophy pursues answers to a range of questions by *a priori* examination of intelligible structures (for reasons which will emerge I do not say, as might have been expected, “logical structures”). Thus, *Analytical Thomism*, as I hope to be practising it, involves the bringing into mutual relationship of the styles and preoccupations of recent English-speaking philosophy and the concepts and concerns shared by St Thomas and his followers.

...

[With regard to central philosophical questions] I believe that what is wanted, and what St Thomas provides the resources for, is a *philosophical description* of intentionality, mindedness, personhood, causation, the intelligible structure of reality and the rest (including issues in ethics, social philosophy and aesthetics and aesthetics) and that this is a matter of *placing* these phenomena (a term I think I owe to John McDowell) in their true relationships. Earlier I spoke of the *a priori* investigation of “intelligible” rather than “logical” structures. The point, implicit again here, is that the relationships which reason discloses may be non-contingent (and naturally grounded – not merely structural properties of human conceptual schemes) without being strictly logical ones, in

the sense of logical that is definable by reference to standard formal relations such as entailment. The provision of a philosophical description is the project of *Analytical Thomism* in my use of the term.

I have quoted extensively to try to give a flavour of what I was then thinking, but also in the hope that traditional Thomists may feel some sympathy for the project, touching as it does on themes that have generally been prominent in their own intellectual endeavours. A few years earlier I wrote in similar terms, though not at that point speaking of “analytical Thomism,” in a review of the first volume of *Thomistic Papers* published by the Center for Thomistic Studies in Houston. The review begins: “Anyone of educated philosophical sensibilities who troubles to read Aquinas should be struck by two thoughts: first that he is a *great* philosopher, and second that he is an *analytical* one”. And it ends “it is to be hoped that the result [of learning from something of modern American Thomism] may be that neo-scholasticism is able to attract the interest of young analytical philosophers who can bring to it the critical power, inventiveness and rigour of their own tradition”.⁶

III

Of course, whether Thomas is appropriately described as an “analytical philosopher” depends on what the expression is meant to connote. Famously, Russell claimed that “There is little of the true philosophic spirit in Aquinas. ... Before he begins to philosophise, he already knows the truth; it is declared in the catholic faith. If he can find apparently rational arguments for some parts of the faith, so much the better; if he cannot, he need only fall back on revelation.”⁷ Yet anyone in a position to make a proper assessment will know that this is prejudiced, unsupported and unfair. So far as positive analytical attributes are concerned: favouring clarity, detecting and resolving ambiguity, aiming at rigour, and requiring evidence and argument, Aquinas certainly exhibits those. One might think, however, that being an analytical philosopher must also bring with it hostility to the metaphysical or to the idea of the immaterial. If that were so then Aquinas could hardly be described as such, and certainly many philosophers who would see themselves as working within the tradition of Russell and Wittgenstein have shown such hostility.

This sort of animus is often quoted by Thomists, and by others who have come to see analytical philosophy as essentially positivist and reductionist. It is worth noting, therefore, that the same point has been made from within the analytical school. One critic, particularly relevant to the present context, is the late Elizabeth Anscombe (wife of Peter Geach). She begins an article entitled “Analytical Philosophy and the Spirituality of Man” as follows:

It is often and not wrongly said that “analytical philosophy” comprises methods rather than doctrines. However, there is at any rate one philosophical position which is extremely common – though not peculiar to nor universal – among analytical

philosophers: so common that it is often assumed without argument. That is: the rejection of the idea of immaterial substance.⁸

This observation is echoed in another very short essay entitled “Twenty opinions common among Anglo-American Philosophers” where she writes “Analytical philosophy is more characterized by styles of argument and investigation than by doctrinal content. . . . However, there are a number of opinions which are inimical to Christianity which are very often found implicitly or explicitly among analytic philosophers.”⁹ Here, though, there is no explicit mention of materialism (or atheism), though the first in her syllabus of errors is the opinion that “A dead man – a human corpse – is a man, not an ex-man.”

I would not deny that Anglo-American analytical philosophers tend to a materialist world view, but the source of this lies not with their particular philosophy, in the narrow sense, but with the broader, scientific and empirical culture in which they were formed, and which in earlier stages contributed to the eclipse of scholastic Aristotelianism. That challenge was first fashioned not in the twentieth but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The rejection of the idea of immaterial substance and the opinions attributed as commonly held, are widespread among Western intellectuals more generally; and it is a measure of how strong is their influence that Anscombe herself had to work hard to show that they were unwarranted, and did so with variable success. Moreover, as she observed, since analytical philosophy is properly characterized not in terms of doctrines but of methods and styles of argument and investigation, “It is thus possible for people of widely different beliefs to be practitioners of this sort of philosophy. It ought not to surprise anyone that a seriously believing Catholic Christian should also be an analytical philosopher.” She and Peter Geach proved prime witnesses to that possibility.

It may be granted that analytical philosophy is not intrinsically hostile to theistic metaphysics, and that Thomas shared intellectual qualities with thinkers such as Russell, Wittgenstein, Davidson and Putnam, but yet the case for analytical Thomism is still opposed, now on the grounds that Aquinas was not a philosopher but a theologian and that Thomism is not a philosophical movement but a theological one. While I have sympathy with those who resist the effort to partition Aquinas’s ideas into distinct intellectual categories, the notion that he cannot be allowed a philosophical identity seems unreasonable to the point of raising a question of hostility to philosophy that is alien to the spirit of Thomas’s own work, and even seems something of a mirror image of Russell’s position.

Others allow that there is metaphysics in Thomas but use the connection with theology, and that with Catholic doctrine, to argue that a faithful believer must accept Aquinas’s position on particular metaphysical points. This, too, seems unreasonable and can appear intimidating; as if to impose a narrowly drawn religious requirement on the tolerable range of philosophical interpretations of fundamental metaphysical ideas. Needless to say such an attitude is not likely to encourage dialogue, and the threat it poses is not just to the possibility of engaging those not antecedently committed to Christian theism but to the possibility of a broad Christian philosophical community.

Finally, on issues of definition, someone might say that it is unclear what analytical philosophy is, or that if it was once well defined it has now become indistinct or mutated, or even ceased to exist. Again I am sympathetic to the suggestion that intellectual movements are continuous rather than sharply discrete, and that efforts to draw closed lines across time or around ideas are certain to be defeated by counterexamples. Yet there is something wilful in the effort to resist the possibility of fusing the philosophical methods developed and deployed by Frege, Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Quine, Strawson, Davidson, Anscombe, Geach, Putnam, Kripke and Lewis, with the metaphysical and ethical orientation of Aquinas and his followers, on the grounds that while the latter constitute an identifiable group the former do not. Certainly there are significant differences between various members of the first group, but then there are also significant differences among Thomists, as they themselves well know – witness, for example, the relations between transcendental and existential Thomists.

Whatever the limits to the possibility of analytical Thomism, let them be discovered through enquiry rather than stipulated in advance.

IV

From the point of view of the general outlook associated with Aquinas, developments in recent Anglo-American philosophy should be especially welcome. Metaphysics is again flourishing. Questions of substance, modality and causality are to the fore, with no presumption in favour of nominalism or projectivism. Indeed, during the last thirty years debates *between* realists and anti-realists have formed an increasingly prominent aspect of the scene. Sometimes these controversies have concerned particular and limited areas of the subject; but running alongside, and in and out of these disputes there has been a more general issue: that of the nature of reality and its relation to human cognition. Setting aside the more flamboyant and culturally charged contributions from continental post-modernists and their counterparts in Britain and America, there has been a general tendency for the issue of realism and anti-realism to be formulated in ways that are rarely agreeable to both parties to the dispute.

There are several reasons for this, some of which are internal to the projects of the disputants, but a more general cause is that it has seemed that one or another of the disputing parties, but most often the realist, has been working with a view of what objective reality, and our means of knowing it, would have to be like for it to draw its inspiration from empirical science. I believe that, for example, this underlies arguments directed against moral cognitivism and the attack in philosophy of mind on common sense psychology. Reasonably, and I think rightly, some have reacted to this “scientistic” presumption and argued the need for a more humanistic understanding of knowledge and its objects. In doing so, however, they have too often concluded that realism must be at fault and that what is required is an alternative constructivist philosophy. That is to say, for want of finding a form of full-blooded realism that is congenial to human existence and the objects and

values of experience, they have opted for forms of Kantian, pragmatist and phenomenological anti-realism.

Much of what I find attractive in Aristotelian-cum-Thomist philosophy is the prospect of developing a genuine realism that is pluralistic and non-reductive, which finds a place for the natural and the moral sciences and which releases the downward pressure to covert all being, and all knowledge of being, into the matter and methods of physics. Yet it is one thing to describe the desired outcome and another to achieve it. In various writings I have been concerned with presenting the merits of analytical Thomist accounts in metaphysics and philosophy of mind, and here I have defended the coherence of this general approach, but there are obstacles to be negotiated if the task of philosophical “placement” is to be successful.

Several of the contributors to this collection take issue with what they regard as inadequate analytical treatments of the Thomist doctrine of existence. Interestingly, quite a number of other recent articles have been directed against the critical assessment of Thomas’s doctrine presented in Anthony Kenny’s book *Aquinas on Being*.¹⁰ This is to the good, for it forces both sides to think harder and differently than they otherwise might have done about an issue that is central to metaphysics. There is more work to be done here, particularly since notions of modes and degrees of being are central to Thomistic accounts of cognition and of the demonstrable dependence of the parts and totality of nature upon a creator.

Nature itself, and natures, form another area in which current understanding is severely limited. Thomists maintain that causality expresses the nature of the agent (and of the recipient) and is no mere external relation connecting the mechanical properties of things. Moreover, causality requires form and finality as well as material and efficient aspects, and at its deepest it is *per se* and not *per accidens*. These ideas have great potential but often they are expressed in terms that are hard to make sense of or to apply. Analytical philosophers, meanwhile, have developed powerful logical tools for determining what does and does not follow from causal (and modal) claims, but often these seem to be applied to relatively superficial cases. Again there is scope for collaboration and synthesis.

Rather than multiply examples, I will end by mentioning something less easy to identify but no less important. These are the challenges posed to intellectual enquiry by cultural degradation externally, and by academic professionalization internally. The first is generally evident and widely complained of. It has many aspects but perhaps the most threatening is the sense that understanding has no intrinsic value; that knowing things is just a matter of accumulating facts, the worth of which depend upon what that knowledge can deliver. The second is harder to identify, not because there is any doubt that it is occurring but because it is uncomfortable to contemplate. Academic thinkers have been narrowed by specialization and lost much of the capacity to communicate beyond the confines of their niche areas. The discursive collegiality that was once common in both analytical and Thomistic environments, and which is necessary for the cultivation of humane learning, has given way to exchanges among experts. Meanwhile, at least in some fields, philosophy has conformed itself to the model of science: delivering up regular research results that do not even aspire to reach beyond

narrow specialisms, or the larger, but still small internal market that is, in many places, the contemporary academy.

Thinking of the range of Wittgenstein or Russell, or of that of Aquinas or Maritain, and thinking of how all of these were concerned with understanding what it is to be human, future projects for analytical Thomism commend themselves in the areas of philosophical anthropology and the philosophy of culture. In times of fragmentation it is all the more important to attain, and retain, a coherent encompassing vision whereby to understand things, and in reflection on the subject of understanding to achieve an ennobling vision of human nature itself. I believe we can get there if we all work together and if others are encouraged to join in the effort. That last point is a reminder, finally, of the need for education in the sources and purposes of analytical Thomism.

Notes

- 1 For further discussion see John Haldane, "A Thomist Metaphysics" in R. Gale (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
- 2 Some of these matters are addressed in "Catholicism and Philosophy," Part 1 of John Haldane, *Faithful Reason: Essays Catholic and Philosophical* (London: Routledge, 2004).
- 3 *Analytical Thomism, The Monist*, volume 80, number 4, October 1997.
- 4 So far as openness on the analytical side is concerned, readers may be interested to know that in response to an invitation to contribute to the *Monist* issue, Donald Davidson wrote "I am flattered that you think I could write something on analytic Thomism. I might try if I had the time" (personal correspondence, 3 August 1995). A quarter of a century before then, he had written of the great value of Aquinas's treatment of voluntary action and incontinence, see "How is Weakness of the Will Possible?" in Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
- 5 "Analytical Thomism" in Ted Honderich (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 875.
- 6 Review of V.S. Brezik (ed.) *Thomistic Papers I*, in *Philosophical Books*, Volume 27, number 2, April 1986, pp. 79–82.
- 7 Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1946), pp. 484–85.
- 8 Elizabeth Anscombe, "Analytical Philosophy and the Spirituality of Man" in Mary Geach and Luke Gormally (eds) *Human Life, Action and Ethics: Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*, St Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs, Volume 5 (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2005).
- 9 Elizabeth Anscombe, "Twenty opinions common among Anglo-American philosophers" in A. Ansaldo (ed.) *Persona, Verita e Morale. Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Teologia Morale* (Rome: Citta Nuova Editrice, 1987); to be reprinted in Mary Geach and Luke Gormally (eds.) *Faith, Reason and Practice: Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*, St Andrews Studies in Philosophy and Public Affairs, in preparation.
- 10 Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Being* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

Select Bibliography

The reader will find many excellent bibliographical references located in the end notes of the individual chapters of this volume, resources that cover diverse subject matter and furnish many opportunities for further reading. In addition to these cited bibliographical references, we list here a short selected bibliography of additional sources that we judge to be especially useful to the reader in further exploring the terrain of Analytical Thomism.

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